



Planning a Unit of Instruction

by Joyce Gallagher, Webster University

Planning a unit of instruction can, at times, be an overwhelming task. Make life a little easier on yourself with this simple 12-step approach that is not only logical, but it will keep you and your unit organized. Here's how to get started:

Select a Topic. Choose one that isn't too broad. These questions can help you make your decision:

- What must I teach to fulfill state, district and local standards?
- What do students already know? What do they need to know?
- What are my students' interests?
- What materials do I have that need to be organized into a unit?

Establish a Purpose. Ask yourself why you are teaching this particular unit. What do you want it to provide for your students? Prior to beginning your unit, decide what your answer will be when a student asks, "Why do we have to learn this stuff?" Consider an answer that tells them that knowing this "stuff" will: give you background for something else that you will learn later; give you the opportunity to explore something you have not learned before; give you important skills that you need in life, such as communication and language skills, decision-making, problem-solving and thinking skills, so on.

Decide How Much Time to Spend on the Unit. In a nine-month school year, there are roughly 36 weeks. Make a list of the unit topics to be covered in that time. Include the new one which you will prepare. How many days or weeks can be devoted to each unit?

Consider Your Materials and Resources. What's available for teaching this topic? What do you have in your room? What might you borrow from other teachers? How will libraries help? What can you get from the Internet? Are there free materials available? What people (parents, community members, other teachers) might visit and contribute to a discussion with your class?

Decide What Skills Will Be Taught or Emphasized. In a content unit, include skills appropriate to that content. Check what skills should be covered at any given grade level by looking at curriculum guides, grade level and content objectives, state performance standards, end of chapter objectives and teacher's manuals.

Decide What Vocabulary to Include. What new words will be introduced? What old words will be reviewed? What will students do with the words? How will you teach vocabulary?

Write Your Unit Goals. Goals answer the question, "What do I want students to know by the end of this unit?" Brainstorm a list of everything that you want the students to gain during this unit. Group the items and organize them in the order they will be taught. Use this list to write goals.

Determine Your Lesson Objectives. Based on the unit goals, decide how many lessons will cover the unit and write a specific objective for each lesson.

Plan a Unit Introduction. This should be motivating and grab your students' interest.

Create Lesson Plans to Fit Lesson Objectives. Consider level abilities of students. Include variety to meet multiple intelligences and right brain/left brain preferences.

Plan a Culminating Lesson or Activity. This is a great way to wrap up the unit and bring the learning together. If the final activity is a test review, use a fun way to review, such as a game.

Prepare a Unit Evaluation. Use scoring guides to evaluate student projects, written and oral reports, group work and students' journals. A portfolio of work done during the unit might be part of the final evaluation.

Source: *Highlights for Children*; reprinted with permission, January '07

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FDLRS/East Library Highlights

As a reminder, you can search our FDLRS Library database from your own computer at school or at home. Just go to our website - <http://fdlrs.brevard.k12.fl.us/east/> - click on the “Library” button, then click on the “Search the database” button, and enter a keyword, or title, etc. It will bring up a list of materials in groups of 10 at a time. If there are more than 10 materials, just click the “next” button and you’ll see the next 10 items. If you find something you want to check out, just give us a call or send us an email request with the catalog # (letters and numbers). If the material is checked out, we can put you on a waiting list. We can send materials to you through the courier/county truck and you can return them to FDLRS the same way. It’s that easy!

Here are a few of our most recent acquisitions. Contact FDLRS/East at 321-631-1911, ext. 540 (Brevard) or 386-258-4684 (Volusia) to checkout these materials and more.

XACA339 The Rosen Real Reading Program, Grades 3 - 4; The Rosen Publishing Group
An extra large kit includes 18 booklets (5 copies each) that contain text content graded for fluency readers in grades 3 – 4. Appropriate for guided or independent reading. Includes six chapter books to challenge more advanced readers.

XACA340 The Rosen Real Reading Program, Grades 2 - 3; The Rosen Publishing Group
An extra large kit includes 18 booklets (5 copies each) that contain text content graded for early fluency readers in grades 2 – 3. Appropriate for guided or independent reading.

XACA341 Phonics for the Real World; The Rosen Publishing Group
An extra large kit includes 18 booklets (5 copies each) that pairs words with vivid four-color photographs to reinforce specific phonetic sounds in a logical sequence. This is a phonics-based series of nonfiction books that are easy to read.

LD186 Follow Your True Colors to the Work You Love; True Colors, Inc. Publishing
A popular method for matching your personality to your career. Helps you to discover your natural strengths and talents.

G417 Cobblestone: Ellis Island – Gateway to America; Cobblestone Publishing Company
Features include: Family Reunion; Flocking to Ellis Island: The Early Years; Whose Island is It; A National Solution; Voyage of Hope, Voyage of Tears; Immigrants Who Made It; and more.

G418 Cobblestone: Congress – Government of the People; Cobblestone Publishing Company
Features include: Introducing...Bill!; Just the Facts; Crisis of Government; A Capital Capitol; A Popular Passageway; Pages on Patrol; In Committee: Lawmakers at Work; and more.

G419 Cobblestone: The Great War; Women Join the Fight; Cobblestone Publishing Company
Features include: The Healing Touch; Taking to the Sky; Enlisting the Aid of Yeomanettes; Answering the Call; Women for Peace; The Suffrage War; and more.

F449 Odyssey: Surf’s Up!; Carus Publishing Company
Feature stories include: In the Curl; The Perfect Wave: Surfing in Science; Intertidal Living; The Killer Rip; The Tranquil Sea; Tsunami Terror; Monsters of the Sea – Rogue Waves; On Deadly Ground: Storm Surge; and more.

F450 Odyssey: Bodywork – Science of Surgery; Carus Publishing Company
Feature stories include: Welcome to the OR; At the Cutting Edge: A Day in the Life of a General Surgeon; Conquering Pain: The Story of Anesthesia; A Look at the Science of Bionics; Bloodsuckers; Einstein’s Knife; and more.

F451 Odyssey: shhhhhh! The Science of Sound; Carus Publishing Company
Feature stories include: The Power of Sound; Now H.E.A.R. This! Music to Your Ears; Acoustical Architecture: Building the Best Concert Halls; Too Noisy for Whales; When Noise Hurts: Hyperacusis; and more.

Software/Technology Integration Series

This article was provided by Susan McCloskey, VAATT

Implementing literacy instruction for children with moderate to severe disabilities is the focus of the Software/Technology Integration Workshop Series offered by **Volusia Adaptive Assistive Technology Team (VAATT)**. Children who can't hold a book due to physical disabilities and children who can't read out loud due to severe communication deficits still benefit from systematic literacy instruction. Research supports the statement that children with severe cognitive deficits benefit from multiple exposures to vocabulary and content. Effective instruction for these students often comes via the computer, and teachers from Volusia County Schools Mild VE and Multi VE programs participated in a workshop series beginning in October to learn how to create books on the computer using many special features in *PowerPoint*, a program that they all have on their computers. Teachers learned how to add music, how to add narration, and how to use a freeware program called *PowerTalk* to provide voice output to any textbox on a *PowerPoint* slide.

In January they shared the books they had created and also the many and varied extension activities that had been developed to provide supportive opportunities for the reading process. The January workshop also focused on how to provide adaptive access to the computer via hardware, such as switch interface boxes and software programs, such as *Classroom Suite* and *My Own Bookshelf* that have been developed to allow individuals who use switches to access the technology. The participating classroom staff included Pre-K teachers and high school teachers. They will all get copies of what each of them spent time creating between the October and January workshops.

The teachers will meet again in April to share the writing activities that they developed to support the book reading activities. They were shown examples of writing tasks created with a variety of programs that transcribe text into graphics, such as *Writing with Symbols 2000* and *Picture It* and *Pix Writer*. Some programs function as authoring software, so that the teachers can create materials, and others are full fledged writing tools for students who need to do the majority of their writing on the computer. Student writing can be done by providing an onscreen keyboard that can be accessed through the mouse or a switch, or by using an expanded keyboard that can be customized for the student's range of motion, visual acuity, and cognitive functioning level.



Teacher Kristy Byers, Spirit Elementary School, provides adaptive access to the computer via a switch. Her students benefited from multiple exposures to vocabulary and content as she tells the story of The Five Little Pumpkins.



Teacher Holly Eicher, Spirit Elementary School, assists her student in reading The Five Little Pumpkins on the computer. Effective instruction for Holly's students often involves using the computer.



Book Corner Recommended Reading

This article was provided by Sharon Tolson, FDLRS/East

Tovani, Chris. [I Read It, But I Don't Get It! Comprehensive Strategies for Adolescent Readers.](#)

Portland, Maine: Stenhouse, 2000. ISBN: 1-57100-890-X

Tovani, Chris. [Do I Really Have to Teach Reading? Content Comprehension Grades 6-12.](#)

Portland, Maine: Stenhouse, 2004. ISBN: 1-57110-376-7

The above referenced books on strategies for comprehension provide incredible strategic tools for teachers. Chris Tovani's extremely readable style presents real examples of students' frustration at comprehending what they read. She provides useful ways that really help the reader to benefit from using strategies to comprehend text.

Sharon Tolson, FDLRS/East Director, was involved in a professional book study group that just finished exploring these two fine books. The study group also consisted of fifth and sixth grade teachers who wanted to begin preparing students for the reading comprehension demands of the junior and senior high school years. It was determined that these books are excellent to use because you read about the tool and then begin implementing the ideas. The book study group was able to discuss the application and classroom success using the strategies.

These books are a must for all secondary teachers wanting to assure that students have tools for comprehension across all curriculum areas.

If you would like additional information about conducting a professional book study group using an outline of reading and application assignments on the above referenced selections, please email Sharon Tolson, Director, FDLRS/East, at tolsons@brevard.k12.fl.us.



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FCAT Administrations

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards. The FCAT, administered to students in grades 3-11, contains two basic components: criterion-referenced tests (CRT), measuring selected benchmarks in Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Writing from the Sunshine State Standards (SSS); and norm-referenced tests (NRT) in Reading and Mathematics, measuring individual student performance against national norms.

FCAT Administrations				
Grades	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science
3	█		█	
4	█	█	█	
5	█		█	█
6	█		█	
7	█		█	
8	█	█	█	█
9	█		█	
10	█	█	█	
11				█

In addition to the resources available through daily instruction, there are additional electronic resources available to prepare for FCAT.

The **FCAT Sample Test Books and Answer Key Books** are produced to prepare students to take the tests in mathematics and reading (grades 3-10), in science (grades 5, 8, and 11), and in writing (grades 4, 8, and 10). The **Sample Test Books** are designed to help students become familiar with FCAT by providing helpful hints and offering practice answering questions in different formats. The **Sample Answer Keys** are designed to be used by teachers to explain to students the answers and solutions to the questions in the **Sample Test Books** and to identify which Sunshine State Standards benchmark is being tested by the question.

The **Sample Test Books** and **Sample Answer Keys** are available on the Internet through the FLDOE website in Adobe.pdf format and must be viewed with Adobe Acrobat Reader Software.

Source: *Exceptional Communicator*, Hillsborough, Nov./Dec. '06

The Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System is funded by the State of Florida, Department of Education, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, through federal assistance under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, IDEA Part B, Preschool, and State General Revenue Funds.

*This publication can be made available to persons with disabilities in a variety of formats, including large print, cassette tape, and braille. Telephone or written requests should be made at least two weeks prior to the time you need the material and should include your name, address and phone number. In Brevard County requests should be made to Kim Riddle, ESE Lead Teacher, 2700 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, FL 32940-6601, (321) 633-1000, ext. 535 and in Volusia County to FDLRS, 1825 Dunn Avenue, Daytona Beach, FL 32114, (386) 258-4684.

* You can access the *Coastline* newsletter by visiting the FDLRS/East website at <http://fdlrs.brevard.k12.fl.us/east/> OR http://www.volusia.k12.fl.us/ese/fdlrs_east