

Preparing for Teaching Using Instructional Materials

Overview of preparing for teaching using instructional materials

School- or district-provided instructional materials are key resources as teachers work to support learning and ensure that what students learn is aligned with local, state, and national goals. To use them effectively, teachers analyze materials carefully, becoming deeply familiar with the scope and sequence of a unit and with the core academic content, tasks, and activities of individual lessons. They then adapt them to meet the needs of specific learners and contexts.

Advancing justice through preparing for teaching using instructional materials

States and school districts increasingly adopt specific instructional materials as a strategy for pursuing equity. In theory, well-designed instructional materials ensure that all students receive instruction in standards-aligned, grade-level appropriate content. When districts stipulate that teachers use them, they reduce the possibility that teachers will choose to use materials that result in some children receiving instruction in less challenging and less relevant material. To contribute to children's learning, however, instructional materials must be used with skill. In particular, teachers must understand how to adapt materials to the needs of specific learners and contexts and how to ensure that materials contain sufficient scaffolds and framing to support cultural relevance and equitable practice.



Decomposition of preparing for teaching using instructional materials

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Preparing for Teaching Using Instructional Materials

Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Unpacking and analyzing the unit	• Identify the primary learning goals. ○ Identify key objectives, terms, concepts, and practices. ○ Compare identified learning goals to one's own students' current knowledge and skill. • Identify and review the primary assessments and tasks. ○ Review any exemplars or answer keys that accompany primary assessments and tasks, and/or complete some or all of the exemplars and tasks yourself. ○ Evaluate whether assessments and tasks match the major goals of the unit. • Identify the sequence of major instructional activities and clarify how they relate to each assessment and major task. ○ Pinpoint "steps" students will need to take on their way to achieving lesson objectives that are critical for understanding. ○ Note terms, concepts, and practice that might be especially hard for students based on what we know about common patterns of student thinking. • Identify how the unit builds on prior learning and connects to future units. • Map the unit against one's own teaching schedule and note any necessary adjustments that will need to be made.



Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Unpacking and analyzing each lesson	• Identify the content point(s) of the lesson. • Review this content from the perspective of learners and identify what will be challenging to understand. • Do the student work and begin to anticipate students' responses. • Identify the role of the lesson in the larger unit and in the longer trajectory of the content. • Identify the most important tasks and activities, including digital teaching supports, and analyze whether and how they will help students meet the learning goals; determine whether the cognitive load is appropriate. • Identify what tools and resources are needed; if not available, determine where they will come from. • Analyze for cultural relevance and equitable practice, paying attention to activity framings, tasks, texts, directions to students, and other features through this lens.



Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Making any necessary adaptations	• Determine any necessary scaffolds or changes in the unit and in individual lessons to maintain appropriate academic demand and support students' engagement with the material. ○ Ensure that students will be engaged in appropriately cognitively demanding work aligned with the learning goals. ○ Support equitable practice and cultural relevance. ○ Avoid fostering misconceptions. • If necessary, adapt the layout of lessons in the unit to match actual instructional time required and available teaching days. • Adapt the timings laid out in each lesson to match available time and the required time each aspect may take. • If necessary, adapt primary assessments and tasks, e.g., by removing or adding items or components, making language more accessible, or making the content more culturally relevant.
Creating a useable form of the unit and lesson plans to use during instruction	• If needed, create a new version of the unit plan, or annotate the existing one to reflect adaptations. • For each lesson plan: ○ Annotate the plan with any changes. ○ Create a quick agenda for teacher reference, with estimated timings for each activity. ○ Prepare all necessary materials and tools, including technology.

