# DESE logo on a decorative photo of two smiling teachers reviewing unit materialsUnit Unpacking Tool

DESE Instructional Planning and Observation Tools Collection

## Guiding Question

**How do I plan for** [**deeper learning**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/dl-guidance-tool.docx)**?**

## This Tool Helps Educators

* Establish a clear vision for the student learning experience throughout the unit.
* Identify the goals, targeted content, language, and practice standards of a unit.
* Plan for student access, engagement, and individualized support.
* Reflect on and mitigate adult biases.

This tool includes critical thinking, reflection, and planning questions that all educators can use to support their instructional planning. It can be used to support individual thinking or to structure robust conversations among teams before teaching a unit. **You can find a facilitator’s companion in the** [**Planning Tools Guidance.**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/planning/tool.html)

##  Unit Unpacking Tool



### #1 iconStep 1: Anchor in the Vision and Data

| *Unpacking Question* | *Reflection and Discussion Prompts* |
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| **What is our vision for strong instruction in this content area?** |  Consider and reflect on: * Desired student outcomes, district and school priorities, and instructional vision
* Areas for growth that have emerged from recent learning walks and/or observations
* Trends from recent analysis of student work or data

Discuss: * What do we need to pay attention to as we examine this upcoming unit? Why?
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### #2 iconStep 2: Align on the Purpose and Goals of the Unit

| *Unpacking Question* | *Reflection and Discussion Prompts* |
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| **What are students learning in the unit and why?** | Discuss the purpose of the unit.* What would deeper learning look and sound like in this unit?
* What is the overarching topic, problem, issue, or phenomenon that students explore in this unit?
* To what extent does the unit provide opportunities for students to drive their own learning and consider real-world connections?

Discuss what students are learning.* What will a student know and be able to do after this unit?
	+ How does this unit build off students’ prior learning, and how does it build towards future learning?
	+ How does this unit align to and support mastery of [grade-level content standards](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html) and practices, including those for English language development (WIDA)?
* What are the specific focus language goals of this unit? If none exists, the group should either add this as a next step following the meeting or identify them together. Refer to [Creating Focus Language Goals](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/tools-resources/focus-language-goals.docx) as needed.
* To what extent does the unit provide opportunities for students to drive their own learning and consider real-world connections?

**Review the core unit assessment(s) or culminating task(s) and exemplar(s), and discuss what students need to know and do to demonstrate mastery**.* What are the driving language demands (key language uses, communication modes, and/or priority language expectations) of the assessment or task? Refer to [English language development standards](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf) (WIDA)?
* What are the components of a successful response and/or product if this task or question is completed at the depth of the grade-level content and practice standards?
	+ If there is no exemplar available, the group should add this as a next step following the meeting.

*To support English learners, determine what the culminating task or assessment looks like at different proficiency levels.** What does it look like at each level of English language proficiency or range of levels (i.e., ELD levels 1-2, 3-4, 5-6)?
* What types of language should students at each level of English language proficiency be expected to use independently? For more guidance, review the proficiency level descriptors and/or the grade-level proficiency level descriptors within the [English Language Development Standards Framework](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf) (WIDA).

How does this unit support students in developing disciplinary literacy?* What is the key language and vocabulary of the discipline that all students should develop?
* To what extent is the unit grounded in a range of complex texts (text structure/discourse, language knowledge demands, meaning/purpose)?
* Throughout the unit, how are students reading, writing, speaking, and thinking in ways specific to the discipline?

How will we know students have learned?* To what extent is there a clear criteria for success shared with students throughout the unit?
* After grounding in the unit assessment(s), culminating task(s), or exemplar, did any additional skill, knowledge, or language demands of the task surface? To what extent are these demands taught and practiced throughout the unit?
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### #3 iconStep 3: Consider Your Students

| *Unpacking Question* | *Reflection and Discussion Prompts* |
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| **How does this unit recognize, center, and affirm diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences?** | Discuss what teachers and students already know about the unit topic.* What beliefs, perspectives, and/or misconceptions might we or students have about this topic?
* How might my identity influence my facilitation choices in the unit?

Discuss opportunities for engaging students' identities within the learning. * How can we leverage students’ cultural identities, funds of knowledge, and/or connections to their home language?
* To what extent does the unit provide opportunities for students to drive their learning and consider real-world connections?

Discuss whose story or experiences are centered and missing.*Reflect on the* [*seven forms of curricular bias*](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Session-Two-Curriculum-and-Learning-Environments-Bias-In-Instructional-Materials.pdf)*.** To what extent are any of these biases present in existing unit materials?
* How can we mitigate any existing bias?
* What opportunities do students have to engage with diverse perspectives and resources over the course of the unit?
* Who is centered and missing? What implicit and explicit messages are communicated as a result?

*Notice which questions above were harder for us to answer.** Consider how we could build our capacity to answer them more easily in the future, e.g., through deepening our knowledge of the content and our students.
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| Pause and reflect icon | **Pause and Synthesize** Record any relevant next steps for planning that have emerged from Steps 2 and 3. Ensure that no next steps undermine the coherence or rigor of the materials. |
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### #4 iconStep 4: Plan for Access and Engagement

| *Unpacking Question* | *Reflection and Discussion Prompts* |
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| **How can our facilitation of this unit increase all students’ capacity as independent learners and cultivate deeper learning?** | Skim the daily lessons for the unit or review an overview of each lesson if available. Consider the assets and needs of all students.* What do recent data, student IEPs, ELD levels, and student work show?
* What strengths do students already bring as related to the skills, language, and content of this unit?
* What might be challenging for students during the unit?

Identify supports and scaffolds students might need.* How will students be supported to grow in their capacity as independent learners and engage in deeper learning throughout the unit?
* What skills, knowledge, language, standards, or concepts from prior units might we need to spiral into instruction to set students up for success in this unit?
* Where and how will we plan to explicitly teach language through content and incorporate opportunities for language development?

Consider the strengths and weaknesses of existing instructional materials and plan for engaging all students.* To what extent does this unit create opportunities for frequent, robust student-to-student discourse and cooperative learning that advances student learning?
* To what extent does the unit provide opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and revise or refine their thinking throughout the unit?
* To what extent are there opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in a way that is meaningful, authentic to the discipline, and relevant to them?
* As facilitators of this unit, what will we do to amplify these opportunities and ensure all students are engaged in learning that is inclusive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, real world, relevant, and interactive?

Consider how the learning and lessons in this unit intersect with the curricula of other content areas.* Talk to a colleague in a different content area.
* Identify any high-leverage strategies that could be aligned across content areas.
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### #5 iconStep 5: Closing & Next Steps

| *Unpacking Question* | *Reflection and Discussion Prompts* |
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| **What high-leverage instructional practice or strategy should we prioritize to support students to meet the learning goals of the unit and cultivate deeper learning?** | Identify what we need to do logistically to teach this unit.* Materials, classroom set up, content knowledge building, or student home language(s) building needed

Determine which lessons and student work from the unit we will collaboratively internalize and analyze.* Which lessons and/or tasks engage students in authentic work of the discipline and/or build the knowledge, skills, academic language, and thinking required for the culminating task(s)?
* Use the Lesson Internalization and Looking at Student Work tools.

**Language Goals** * If none exists, either add this as a next step following the meeting or identify them together. Refer to [Creating Focus Language Goals](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/tools-resources/focus-language-goals.docx), as needed.
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| Pause and reflect icon | Synthesize and ReflectSynthesize Steps 4 and 5:* Based on our reflections above and considering both instructional materials and pedagogical practices, what action steps are we going to take when teaching this unit? Consider what to adjust, what to add, what to emphasize, etc. without undermining the coherence or rigor of the materials.
* Restate all next steps that surfaced throughout the tool, assign owners, determine due dates, and follow through.
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