

CHAPTER 4: PLANNING

The *TEAMS Planning Guides* are tools for creating lesson plans which incorporate a variety of independent student activities. There is a guide for each subject area: mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. This chapter will provide suggestions for effectively using the *TEAMS Planning Guides* -- as a TEAMS team member and individually.

The purpose of the *Planning Guides* is to guide teachers in planning learning-station activities that will engage students constructively when they are working independently. The guides are intended for use as flexible planning tools. They provide a framework for teacher innovation. Furthermore, the *Planning Guides* are not designed to tell you how to teach; that is, how to explain content and concepts to your students. Your own instructional techniques and lesson objectives should be incorporated into the TEAMS organizational model.

In short, the *TEAMS Planning Guides* are flexible tools for planning multidimensional station activities for independent learning. With the help of the teaching strategies included in each unit, you will continue as you now do to teach and evaluate individuals, small groups, and the total class, using sound instructional techniques that work for you. The *TEAMS Planning Guides* will help you plan more varied independent activities for students when they are not working directly with you.

Organization of the Planning Guides

The *Planning Guides* are organized into four nine-week units. Each unit is coordinated around a common unit theme. The themes reflect the intersection of personal and social concerns of the early adolescent student (Beane, 1990). The themes are:

Sixth Grade: Transitions, Caring, Identities, Conflict Resolution

Seventh Grade: Institutions, Interdependence, Wellness, Social Structures

Eighth Grade: Independence, Justice, Commercialism, Transitions

The *Planning Guides* suggest academic skills and personal development discussion topics and activities coordinated across the four subject areas for each unit. Suggestions for interdisciplinary applications are provided.

The *Planning Guides* include an introduction stating the purpose of the guide, an overview of the year's units, an overview of how TEAMS relates to current research on middle level education and the subject area, organization of the classroom, general strategies for teaching the subject, and a list of additional references and resources.

There is general information for each specific unit including perpetual skills and personal development issues. Finally, there are specific subject area skills, team planning guides, and

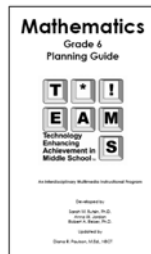
suggested software and station activities with *Task Cards*. Templates for correlating textbook lessons are also provided.

Each unit plan includes the following components:

1. A premise statement for the unit theme.
2. A thematic unit overview including a description of the unit, personal development issues related to the unit, and suggested team activities and related resources.
3. An interdisciplinary curriculum map which includes perpetual skills which transcend all four subject areas.
4. Suggested personal development issues and homeroom activities for each week.
5. A sample team planning guide for weekly joint planning.
6. Suggested specific subject area skills for the unit.
7. A subject area weekly planning guide for individual planning.
8. Suggested websites correlated with subject area topics and skills.
9. *Task Cards* for hands-on activities at the Exploration Stations.
10. A template for correlating text materials with the unit topics and skills.
11. A skills checklist for use in planning, goal-setting, diagnosing, and assessment.
12. A skills correlation chart for alignment with national standards and standardized tests.

Team Planning

TEAMS teachers must meet at least twice weekly to plan and coordinate with their team. One meeting will focus on academic planning. Before meeting, each teacher should review information about the unit in the *Planning Guide*. During the meeting, teachers will use the "Team Planning Guide" (see the Appendix) to correlate spelling/vocabulary words, determine common perpetual skills and the week's personal development issue. These meetings are also used to plan for team activities such as field trips or guest speakers.



Inform support teachers (music, art, guidance, physical education, special education, gifted) of the unit theme and topics. Often they can help correlate activities in their classes to enrich the unit.

The second weekly meeting should focus on trouble shooting, problem-solving, and team-building. See Chapter 6 for more details on these two important types of meetings.

Individual Planning

The *Planning Guides* offer a suggested weekly plan for each unit. First, review this plan and make adjustments as necessary for your classes. Determine your goals and select topics and skills to be covered. Convey these goals to the students since they will need this information to determine their own unit goals and lesson goals which they will record in their *Work Logs*. See Chapter 5 for more information about student goals.

Use the "Individual Planning Guide" (see the Appendix) to plan daily lessons and station activities. Work with your media specialist to collect books, films, and other media. Send parents a list of "collectibles" you may need, such as magazines or egg cartons. Gather the necessary software, manipulatives, games, and other materials you will need. Prepare and laminate station activities. Prepare accompanying *Task Cards*. Whenever possible, have students help make the games and activities for the stations.

As you plan, remember to ask yourself these important questions:

- What is it that I really want my students to know when they have finished this unit?
- Do students have opportunities to make connections between the theme and the other subject areas?
- Is there time for reflection on the theme at periodic intervals?
- Do these topics and activities have authentic interdisciplinary connections?
- Are diverse learning styles accommodated?
- Do students have opportunities to make choices, be self-directed, and take responsibility?
- Is technology naturally integrated with the instructional content (as opposed to using technology for its own sake)?

The Teacher Station: Providing Small Group/Individual Instruction

Most new topics, concepts, and skills will be presented through whole group direct instruction. Students will then engage in related practice activities at the various learning stations.

Undoubtedly, some students will need additional help or enrichment. Small groups or individual conferencing works best for this. This is the function of the **Teacher Station**.

Research advises against tracking students into permanent ability groups. Groups should be flexible and short-lived to meet the changing needs of students. Form groups to work with you at the Teacher Station as needed to reinforce or extend a lesson topic.

The Teacher Station may not be used every day. On most station days you will circulate during station time to interact one-on-one with students to provide guidance, coaching, and encouragement.

The Technology Station: Providing Motivation and Feedback

The **Technology Station** is often the most popular with students and teachers alike. It provides high quality learning time that motivates students and provides immediate feedback -- often with tutorial assistance to guide students on the correct learning path. Take the time to train your students to use the equipment carefully and to navigate through the software and/or websites appropriately (see Chapter 3). The Technology Station is not for fun and games. It is a most valuable learning tool.

The *Planning Guides* suggest software and websites to connect with all unit topics and skills. Titles have been selected to reflect high quality and educational value for your students. Of course you are encouraged to supplement these suggestions with other choices that you wish to add.

As you introduce each new piece of software or website, carefully show students step-by-step procedures for using the menu to get to the right lesson, following directions on the screen, using any special command keys, and recording pertinent information in their *Work Logs*. If you have a projector in your classroom, you can use this to introduce software for the whole class. Otherwise, use the small-group procedure described in Chapter 3.

Of course, you will need to be thoroughly familiar with the software and/or websites that your students are using. Be sure you have previewed the lessons yourself. Use the "Website Evaluation" template provided (see Appendix). Note where pre-teaching and follow-up are required. Some software and/or websites have special options that you may pre-set, and special customized features such as adding your own problems and vocabulary words. The *Planning Guides* will also alert you to the need for pre-teaching any software or websites listed for the unit.

Once you have introduced the software and/or websites, students should be able to proceed on their own with minimal assistance from you. That is a major benefit of computers over traditional seatwork -- computers provide the immediate feedback, guidance, and explanation through tutorial help that written seatwork lacks.

The Exploration Stations: Providing Hands-On Learning

The activities suggested for the **Exploration Stations** offer a wide range of possibilities to meet the needs of all students. The learning experiences in TEAMS encourage the use of multiple learning modalities. Tactile/kinesthetic learners can have the same opportunities for success as visual and auditory learners. The Exploration Station activities also encourage a constructivist approach to learning, where students construct their own meaning through meaningful guided-practice.

The Text Station: Providing Paper/Pencil Practice

The **Text Station** provides focused practice for students to read independently about the content of the lesson and to complete practice exercises for comprehension and reinforcement. Each *TEAMS Planning Guide* provides a template for use in correlating the unit skills and concepts with your textbooks.

TEAMS will work most easily for you and be more cohesive for your students if you follow the sequence of instruction designated in the TEAMS units, rather than following the sequence designated in a textbook. This also facilitates the interdisciplinary coordination so essential to the TEAMS model. Thus the textbook will become a complementary resource, rather than the complete curriculum.

Task Cards

After you have introduced each station activity, you must also provide a *Task Card* as a written reminder of the activity's purpose and instructions. The *Task Card* enables you to remain free to work with students at the Teacher Station -- not waste your time answering repetitious questions about assignments. Using the *Task Card/Work Log* system helps students develop individual responsibility and independence, both lifelong skills for future success.

Make the *Task Cards* specific and clear. Place the *Task Card* at the station where it is clearly visible to all students. A *Task Card* should have a short assignment title for students to record in their *Work Logs*. The title should relate to the skill or topic, since the *Work Log* also helps keep parents informed about the academic content of the unit. It also helps students focus on the purpose of the activity.

The *Planning Guides* include a starter set of station activities with *Task Cards*. You will need to supplement these with your own ideas. Writing effective *Task Cards* takes practice. See the next page for instructions on how to write an effective *Task Card*.

The directions on the *Task Card* should provide all pertinent information including how to complete the activity, how to check the work, and where to place the completed work. The Appendix of this *Teacher's Manual* has a blank *Task Card* to photocopy. There is also a blank *Task Card* template online at www.ifsi.org.

The image shows a template for a 'STATION TASK CARD'. It features a header with the letters T, E, A, M, S in a grid format. To the right of the grid is the title 'STATION TASK CARD'. Below the header, there are several fields: 'Station', 'Activity Name', 'Skill/Objective', and 'Directions'. At the bottom, there is a 'Challenge' section with checkboxes for 'on task', 'place in folder', and 'other'. The card is titled 'TEAMS Grade' at the bottom.



STATION TASK CARD

_____ Station

Activity Name:

Skill/Objective: (COPY IN YOUR WORK LOG)

Directions:

Challenge:

WHEN COMPLETED

check

hand in

place in folder

other _____

TEAMS, Grade ____: _____

Homework

Your team will need to determine your homework policy, paying particular attention to coordinating the nights that homework is assigned in each subject. Be sensitive to the time constraints on busy families as you determine the value of the assignments.

There is a growing body of evidence that homework has little positive effect on academic achievement (Kohn, 2006). Be sure that homework assignments are truly a necessary extension of class work, and not busy work for its own sake.

References

Kohn, A. (2006). *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*. DeCapo Press.

