

### **Module Summary**

#### **In this module, teachers will:**

- Explain the importance of backwards planning.
- Explore the three stages of backwards planning a unit.

### **Key Takeaways**

#### **Essential knowledge:**

Research has found that some of the most common planning problems teachers experience actually arise from teaching without a clear vision of what they want students to learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2001; Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). When students see a purpose to what they are learning and know what they are trying to accomplish, they are more likely to have academic success (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

#### **Essential skill:**

Backwards planning a unit allows a teacher to ensure that all aspects of the learning experience are aligned. This alignment process can be done in three stages.

- 1. Set the vision:** In this stage, teachers identify standards that are to be learned in the unit, break down those standards into objectives, and create essential questions (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005).
- 2. Create a summative assessment:** Creating an assessment before beginning the unit helps ensure that learning activities are rigorous and aligned to standards and objectives (Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Popham, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005).
- 3. Sequence objectives:** Logically ordering objectives helps ensure that the unit is organized, cohesive, and “flows”. Sequencing the content of the unit in a logical way can help build students’ conceptual understandings.

#### **Essential mindset:**

It is important to ensure all aspects of a unit are aligned so that students have rigorous, cohesive, meaningful learning experiences.

### **The Skill in Action**

Teachers who use backwards design create units that are organized and lead to greater student mastery. Both teachers and students have clarity around the goals of the unit, what is to be learned, and why it is important to learn it. Lessons build upon each other sequentially and cover all of the important knowledge and skill that is reflected in the summative assessment. The summative assessment is aligned to all of the standards identified for the unit and measures knowledge at the appropriate level of rigor.



## Questions for Discussion

The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- What were your key takeaways from the module?
- Have you ever attempted backwards-planning a unit before? How did it go for you?
- What challenges do you face when backwards planning?
- Which of the three stages of backwards planning do you currently do well? How do you know?
- Which of the three stages of backwards planning is more difficult for you? Why is that?
- How can I support you in backwards planning your next unit?



## Coaching Moves

*Situation:*

**A teacher struggles with unpacking standards.**

*Ask:*

- What would student mastery of this standard look and sound like?
- Why is this learning important? How is this knowledge used in the real world?

*Suggest:*

- Complete the *Preparing to Differentiate: Student Readiness* module to get more practice at unpacking standards.
- Let's try breaking down a few standards together.



## Standards

**InTASC:**

**7(c)** The teacher develops appropriate sequencing of learning experiences and provides multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge and skill.

**7(d)** The teacher plans for instruction based on formative and summative assessment data, prior learner knowledge, and learner interest.