

3. Student Background and Needs Each student will bring to the learning experience a unique set of skills and prior knowledge. These levels of readiness then shift throughout the unit of study. Meeting academic needs requires that the planning process include both preassessment to understand where each student is beginning and ongoing checks.

4. Five Cs The skills needed to succeed in the workforce, engage in civic life, and function in a connected, global society are increasingly complex. Solving nonroutine problems, making decisions, and contributing as a productive team member are today's basic skills. Instructional plans should include opportunities for students to think critically and creatively, collaborate as a team member, strengthen communication skills, and act as engaged citizens.

5. Big Question or Culminating Performance Instructional plans only matter if they matter to students. Once the big ideas and organizing questions for a unit are clear, what remains is to design a driving question, problem, or project in student terms. What can students create that provides evidence of their mastery of the standards while providing some degree of choice and space for their own ideas?

The Keys to Planning provide a sneak peek at one part of a larger project- a series of briefs describing various aspects of deeper learning classrooms. This effort, which VASCD has dubbed The Pedagogy Project, has engaged a number of educators from school divisions and higher education institutions across Virginia. We look forward to opportunities in the coming months to share this work with you and your colleagues, and we are grateful to the Virginia Department of Education and Jobs for the Future for their support.