Leveraging Unit Planners

February, 2025
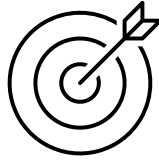Kelsey Day, IBWS Senior Manager
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Goals for today:

- *Understand the purpose and impact of unit planning*
- *Review and discover existing tools and resources*
- *Consider time, expertise and supports within your systems*
- *Brainstorm ways to improve and integrate unit planning in your school*

Tension:

- What's the purpose of **unit planners**?
- How do we move from "checking a box" to meaningful impact in student learning?
- How do unit planners support reflection, collaboration and development?
- What are the main issues that don't have to do with unit planning?

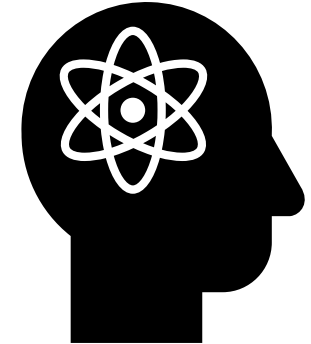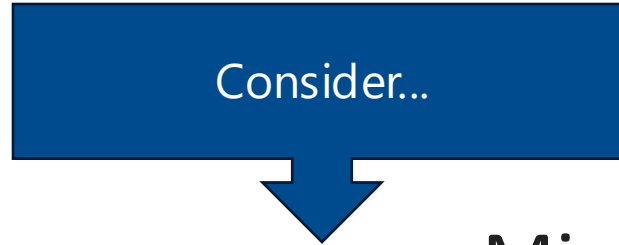# Describe your current written curriculum status:

Tell your story...

- Who is involved?
- What's the history?
- State curriculum?
- Scheduling concerns?

- But first, please consider...

Tell your story...

- Who is involved?
- What's the history?
- State curriculum?
- Scheduling concerns?

Consider...

Human resources
- Curriculum coaches
- Department chairs
- District leaders
- Learning specialists

Mindsets
- Collaborative
- Team-focused
- Vertical and horizonal alignment takes a team
- Reflective
- Agile

Brainstorming:

- Take a piece of paper
- Divide it into three columns
- Title the columns as follows:
  - Contents of an ideal unit planner:
  - Biggest barriers to creating units:
  - Benefits of coherent curriculum:

It should look like this:

Contents of an ideal unit planner:	Biggest barriers to creating units:	Benefits of coherent curriculum:
★		

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In your table groups:

- First column.
- 2 minutes to write down all your ideas.
- Go in a circle and say everything on your paper, one at a time.
- Put a ✔ next to your own if you also wrote that idea down.
- Do not repeat an idea that was already said (so don't say it if there is a check mark next to it).
- Keep circling until all ideas have been stated.
- On chart paper: write down the top three ideas

Discuss:

1. What surprised you?
2. Did you gain any new ideas?
3. As a table, create the same table on the chart paper
4. Write 1-2 sentences that summarize your discussion
5. Share out.

Now on to column 2:

Contents of an ideal unit planner:	Biggest barriers to creating units:	Benefits of coherent curriculum:
	★	

In your table groups:

- Second column.
- 2 minutes to write down all your ideas.
- Go in a circle and say everything on your paper, one at a time.
- Put a ✔ next to your own if you also wrote that idea down.
- Do not repeat an idea that was already said (so don't say it if there is a check mark next to it).
- Keep circling until all ideas have been stated.

Share and collaborate:

1. On the second column of your chart paper: write down the **three most pressing barriers**.
2. Stand up: Take 5 minutes to travel to each chart paper and write down your possible solutions.
3. Goal: Give at least one idea for two different problems

Column 3:

Contents of an ideal unit planner:	Biggest barriers to creating units:	Benefits of coherent curriculum:
		★

In your table groups:

- Third column.
- 2 minutes to write down all your ideas.
- Go in a circle and say everything on your paper, one at a time.
- Put a ✔ next to your own if you also wrote that idea down.
- Do not repeat an idea that was already said (so don't say it if there is a check mark next to it).
- Keep circling until all ideas have been stated.

Discuss:

1. What surprised you?
2. Did you gain any new ideas?
3. Write down the top three benefits on the third column of the chart paper.

Elevator pitch...

- 5 minutes: walk and read the benefits
- 5 minutes: Draft a 1 paragraph elevator pitch for convincing your school community that written curriculum is a benefit for everyone.

Resources:

Programme Resource Center

- PYP: Collaborative planning doc for PYP.
- MYP: MYP Unit Planning and interdisciplinary planning.
- DP/CP: TOK integration and embedding the core into subject groups. Subject group guides.
- All Programmes: UDL resources. Guide to inclusive education (differentiation), Divide up by programme in the end. Identify an aspect that is challenging. FPIP documents for each programme. Local curriculum, state standards, data from assessments.

Human resources and mindsets...
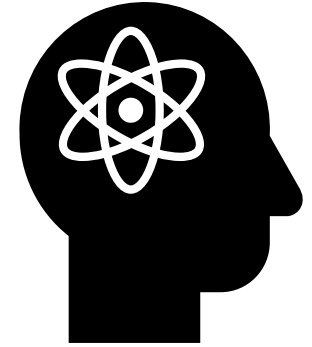
- Curriculum coaches
- Department chairs
- District leaders
- IBWS Senior Managers
- Learning specialists

- Collaborative
- Team-focused
- Vertical and horizonal alignment takes a team
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Why does this matter?

- Unit planner is a vehicle for collaboration. Without it, everyone is working from their own silos.

- Documenting for sustainability. You're creating written curriculum that will be there regardless of turnover, or new staff, or changes that may come.

- Without a written curriculum, you cannot fully reflect on data. The curriculum will ground those discussions. You can improve year-to-year when you're changing a live document, based on current data.

- Allows you to take a step back and see the full educational journey. What's the bigger picture?

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More reasons for written curriculum:

- Allows you to integrate rubrics and criteria that informs student learning over time.

- Why should we go above and beyond the textbooks or canned curriculum? Why become an IB school?

- If we want to give teachers more agency, to be creative directors of learning, then we need to give them an outline and a template that supports this. They are professionals. The IB sees them as professionals.

- Embed behavior, character, expectations and ATLs.

Action steps – take out a blank page, and answer the following questions:

- What is the most important idea you learned from the session that you hope to take with you when you leave?

- Why is this idea important?

- Who will you have to engage to accomplish this?

- What are your first steps?

Action steps –

- Find one other person in the room that you don't know

- Share your idea, its importance, and the first steps you plan to take.

- Please provide feedback on what you are hearing by:
  - Asking any clarifying questions
  - Asking at least one "I wonder . . . " question.