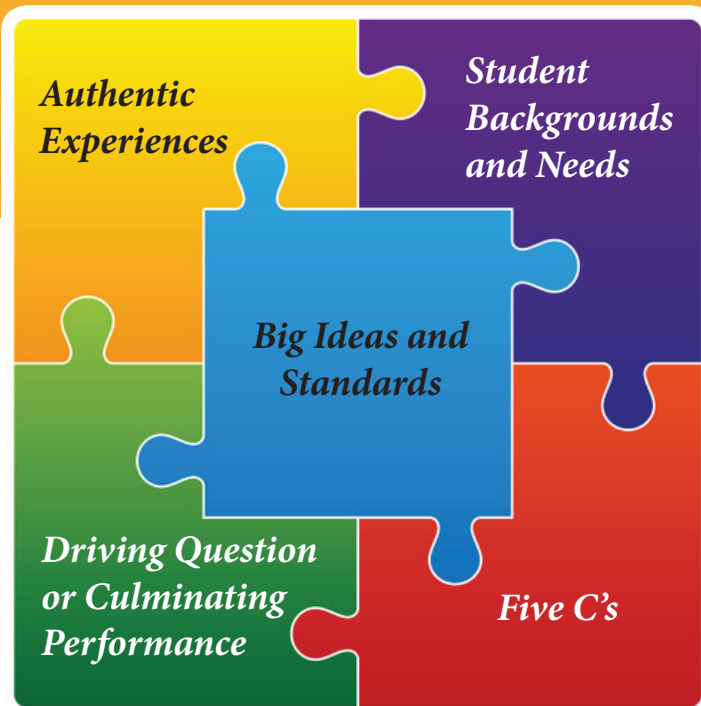


PLANNING FOR DEEPER LEARNING



Essential Question:
How do our plans reflect what we value for students?



Authentic Experiences:
Why, how and what?

WHY: All of us learn best when there is a real context and purpose for our efforts. The answer to the question, “Why do we have to learn this?” is built into authentic experiences and tasks. They are by definition based on learning and doing things that real people in the world outside of school know and do. Authentic experiences are generally more challenging for students in terms of thinking, collaboration, and decision-making skills; they are also more engaging. The resulting learning is better remembered and more often transferable to new situations.

WHAT: Authentic experiences and tasks involve work that is personally relevant and/or has a purpose or audience beyond the classroom. Students work on problems that are current in their communities or their world, rather than from a textbook.

HOW:

- Be aware of and informed about issues that are currently of concern to students. Ask yourself which parts of your curriculum connect to these concerns.
- Consult with experts in the school and community to integrate and contextualize learning experiences.
- When students wonder and express curiosity, find ways to build upon it.
- Consider learning experiences in which students solve a problem in the role of a professional (statistician, wildlife manager, marketer, editor, etc.)
- Devise a project for students that is based on a community need or civic problem.

WHAT MAKES A LEARNING EXPERIENCE AUTHENTIC?

- The problem is real or closely simulates one that is real and interesting to the student.
- The problem can't be solved simply by using a memorized algorithm, it is messy and can be approached in a variety of ways. Students need to use prior knowledge and decision-making skills to choose their methods.
- Academic skills are used in context and with purpose.
- Students use real-world applications of technology.
- While working on an authentic challenge, students will likely need to access information not yet learned in class, practicing their critical thinking and information literacy skills.
- As in life outside school, the knowledge needed to solve authentic problems is rarely confined to one content area.
- Students or groups working on the same problem will likely have a variety of solutions and perspectives.



Considering Student Needs

Each student will begin your unit or lesson with a unique set of skills and prior knowledge. These levels of readiness will shift throughout the unit of study. Meeting student academic needs requires both preassessment to understand where each student is beginning and ongoing checks throughout the unit of study.

WHICH STUDENTS...

THESE STUDENTS MIGHT BENEFIT FROM:

have already partially or completely mastered the content?



Extension tasks that tunnel more deeply into the content or pursue interest-driven explorations of new but related content

will need support and/or scaffolding beyond your basic plans for the class?



Additional materials/resources and/or alternate tasks with necessary supports embedded

will need pre-instruction in order to access the content and skills in the unit?



Mini-workshops to provide context and/or build background knowledge and skills

have experience or interests that could serve as entry points into units of study?



Hooks and activities that harness students' experiences or interests



Five C's: How will students learn?

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 basic skills in today's society. In Virginia, the "Five C's" provide a framework for learning these skills.

Opportunities & STRATEGIES

- COMMUNICATE** • Written and oral expression of ideas through a variety of media addressing both real and simulated audiences
- COLLABORATE** • Face-to-face and virtual small group work that requires both positive interdependence and individual accountability
- THINK CRITICALLY** • Prompts and tasks at higher cognitive levels (see Webb's DOK); opportunities to analyze texts, images, data sets, etc. and draw conclusions
- THINK CREATIVELY** • Open ended, messy problems where students propose solutions and brainstorm in a risk-free environment
- ACT AS ENGAGED CITIZENS** • Tasks designed to address existing issues or problems; opportunities to participate in service learning



Big Ideas and Standards: What will students learn?

A key consideration in planning for deeper learning is how you will help students connect their daily work to big ideas, themes, or questions that are worthy of ongoing thought and study. This is an integrated approach that relies on the Standards of Learning but emphasizes the ways they are related to each other and to the world.

- Identify essential questions and transferable skills in the SOLs; consider questions that can flow through multiple units of study or connect multiple content areas.
- Rethink the title and focus of your unit if you have taught it before. Could the focus be an interdisciplinary or exploratory theme, question, or problem?
- Communicate with colleagues about big ideas and questions from their units. Can connections be made across content areas, throughout the year, or from year to year? Might the sequencing of units be adjusted to capitalize on curricular or real-world connections?
- Consult documents and tools available from the Virginia Department of Education, such as Vertical Articulation Tools for Mathematics, Curriculum Frameworks, and Skills Progression Charts.



Driving Question or Culminating Performance: How will students demonstrate their learning?

Instructional plans only matter if they matter to students. Let's assume we are clear on the big ideas and questions that are organizers for your unit plan and we have ideas about how students can build competence in the Five C's. 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?

When Designing Culminating Performances/Projects:

- Use the learning goals to design success criteria in student language. Check to see that they align with the big ideas and Five C's. This means there will likely be both content and process criteria.
- Plan ways to share and teach the success criteria (perhaps using a rubric) with students at the beginning of instruction, ensuring that students understand their learning goals.
- Revisit "What makes a learning experience authentic?"
- Ask students to use rubrics to evaluate sample products with the goal of understanding the success criteria.
- Reference rubrics and success criteria throughout the unit to focus instruction.
- Build in multiple opportunities to "check in" on student progress.
- Consider how best to support all students.
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate, engage in peer review, and share ideas.



Virginia Department of Education

The Five C's for Professionals:

Planning with Your Team using a Five C's Approach

Students and educators alike get better results using these skills in our work. These indicators show that we are modeling the Five C's in our own PLC and team interactions.

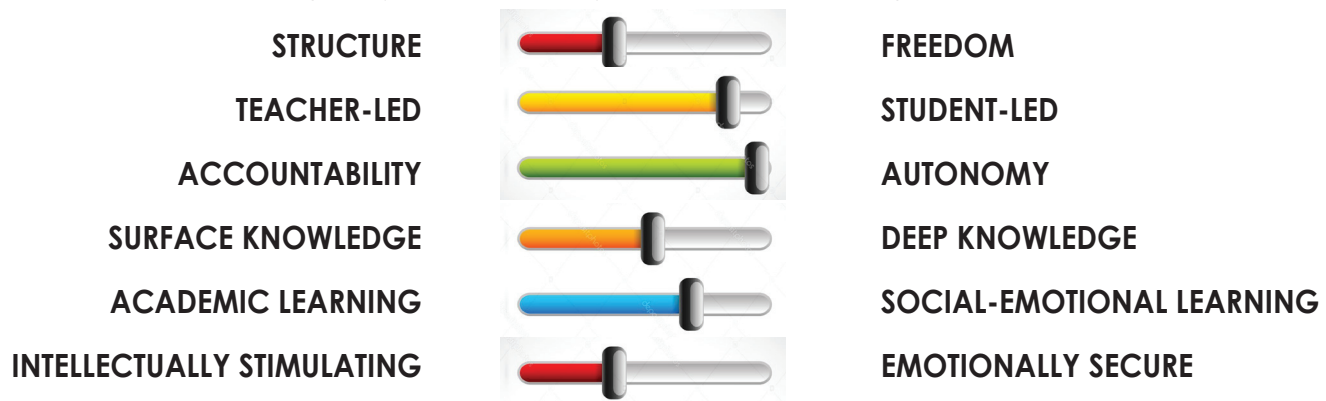
- Start with a clear goal.
- Listen and ask for clarification.
- Give and receive feedback.
- Build on each other's ideas.
- Equalize participation.
- Allow time for creative thinking.
- Engage fully.
- Focus on what's best for students.

Planning for Deeper Learning: Tips for Success

- Plan with a peer.** Planning with someone else makes the experience richer and easier, and models collaboration!
- Start with one unit and one shift you would like to make.** Starting small allows you to isolate what works well and what needs adjustment before building on another planning element.
- Remember that new pedagogies will also be new to your students!** Think ahead of time about what support, instruction, and opportunities for practice they might need.
- Consult with specialists to discuss how students with a variety of needs can best access learning experiences.**
- Collaborate across departments to integrate disciplines.**
- Consider how technology applications can be used to enhance student learning and facilitate differentiation and choice.**
- Explore partnerships with businesses and community groups to build real-world connections.**
- Share your successes, challenges and questions with a colleague.** Ask another teacher to review student work with you. Solicit feedback and ideas.
- Know that something will go wrong, and don't give up too easily.** Planning for deeper learning is complex and uncomfortable at first.
- Commit!** Do as we want our students to do when they don't get it right the first time—make adjustments and try again.
- Communicate with parents on the purpose and value of performances and projects.**

For a list of resources to support Planning for Deeper Learning, visit VASCD.org

As teachers, we are called to continually adjust the sliders below to meet the changing needs of students while embracing the factors that reflect deeper learning classrooms.



The PROFILE OF A CLASSROOM provides basic frameworks and prompts to guide teacher decision making. Content is based on these learning principles and pedagogies developed by Virginia educators. Access the documents at VASCD.org

Learning should...

- ...uncover student strengths through meaningful learning experiences.
- ...be defined by success criteria that are clear, attainable and cultivate future success.
- ...provide regular opportunities for students to make authentic contributions and connections.
- ...be active, driven by investigation, relevance, and application.
- ...foster productive struggle, persistence and growth through a feedback spiral.
- ...occur through meaningful interactions, partnerships, and shared decision making.
- ...ensure that all learners see themselves in the curricular experience.
- ...lead to maximum growth for every student regardless of background or limitations.

Teaching should...

- ...emphasize worthwhile experiences using essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions in pursuit of a solution or product creation.
- ...leverage interdisciplinary thinking and application to the world outside of school, including to career opportunities.
- ...utilize collaborative structures for learning and assessment with self, peers, and/or experts.
- ...include purposeful checkpoints where students set goals, evaluate progress, and plan next steps.
- ...structure time, space, and grouping with student needs in mind.
- ...cultivate classrooms communities where learners feel safe and confident.
- ...tailor learning experiences to be developmentally appropriate, aligned to learning science, and responsive to individual needs.



The Profile of a Virginia Classroom is a partnership between VASCD (vascd.org) and the Virginia Department of Education, with support from Jobs for the Future.