Pacing Guidance for ELA Tier 1 Instruction

This resource provides a process for adjusting a curriculum's pacing guide for Tier 1 instruction based on unfinished learning due to COVID-19. It reflects a prioritization of current-year content in order to mitigate the disproportionate impact on our priority groups of students and to accelerate learning for all. Leaders can use this guidance when making adjustments to their curricular scope and sequence and academic schedule.

The guiding questions below can be used to help school systems make decisions about which content and standards to prioritize, how to create time for unfinished learning, and how to align the priorities with assessments. You will see intentional overlap in steps 2-4 as it is impossible to separate the assessments from what is being taught from unfinished learning. As you work your way through the guiding questions, you will find yourself returning to previous steps, checking assumptions, and revising and moving forward again. Decisions made in each step will have implications across the other steps that will need to be considered as you build your pacing calendar.

1. Inventory Instructional Days

Guiding Question: How do you match the available instructional days to the amount of time the curriculum demands?

Start with the days available for instruction in SY 2020–21.
(Teams should plan to use state testing days for instruction. After missing at least eight weeks of in-school instruction in school year 2019–20, there is an urgent need to minimize the loss of instructional days. Lessons on testing days can be shortened since schedules will need to be adjusted.)

- What are the school or district-wide events that need to be planned around?
  - The first week of school is held for culture building, implementing trauma-informed practices, and rolling out routines and systems for students. Depending on the scenario, the first week of school will be a critical time to inform students and families about contingency plans and to train them on distance learning technology and systems across content. Prioritize priority groups of students during this time. Use this time to inventory students' access to devices and provide as needed.
- Are there 2020-21 school year recommendations from the curriculum publisher regarding the number of modules/units to be taught in a year?
  - What adjustments need to be made to align with your district/school needs?
- Set common pacing expectations at the module/unit level to allow for teacher autonomy on a daily level while keeping grade-level teams on the same general schedule to enable common planning and common assessment calendars.

2. Assessments

Guiding Question: What is the plan for common assessments?

- What assessments are going to be administered across the district?
- What is the purpose each assessment is seeking to serve?
- What does each module/unit assess?
    - After determining which modules/units to eliminate or condense (see guidance below), review the assessment plan to determine how assessments are impacted.
    - Does additional time need to be devoted to preparing students for module/unit assessments in distance or hybrid learning scenarios?
    - Does additional time need to be devoted to administering module/unit assessments in distance or hybrid learning scenarios?
- When will each assessment be given?

3. Access to Grade-Level Content

Guiding Question: What adjustments need to be made to the pacing guide to prioritize reading, writing, and speaking about content-rich grade-level complex text across a variety of learning scenarios including distance learning, in-person learning, and hybrid learning?

During the 2020-21 school year, the focus should be on depth of instruction rather than pace. At the center of instruction should be grade-level complex text and grade-level standards.
- Teach fewer units so there is more time to expand instruction with the priority standards.
- Student Achievement Partners released **guidance** about what standards should be prioritized at each grade level. The priority standards should drive decision-making about what content to prioritize and opportunities to omit or condense content to create more instructional time for depth of instruction.

Knowing that the focus is on depth of instruction, rather than pace, leaders must make decisions about which modules/units to condense, expand, or omit.
- Consider the knowledge story for each of the modules/units.
- Choose to include the modules/units that:
    - Maintain diversity across grade level and grade band (genres, authors, subjects).
    - Are rich in scientific, historical, and literary content and vocabulary.
    - Amplify the **priority standards**.
        - The intentional spiraling of the ELA standards might mean that all modules/units include a large number of priority standards, in which case, use the criteria noted above.
- Prioritize texts in each module/unit:
    - Consider the importance or purpose of each anchor text in each module/unit.
    - How does it contribute to the knowledge story?
    - Does the craft or complexity make the text essential to the module/unit?

- Avoid omitting texts that represent genres students will only read once during the year (i.e., if students only read one memoir, avoid omitting that one memoir).
  - Build additional time in the pacing guide for texts that will likely need additional background building, vocabulary work, or fluency practice.

4. Address Unfinished Learning in Service of Grade-Level Content

Guiding Question: How will you ensure instructional coherence and continuity?

- Fewer modules or units will ensure students have time to work with rigorous, engaging grade-level text and content.
- If the text demands it, addressing prior grade-level standards may be necessary (e.g., analyzing word choice on meaning and tone, including analogies is a grade 8 standard. If 9th grade students are not yet proficient at doing that but are reading a text that requires understanding of analogies, the teacher may need to dip back to the 8th grade standard to move students forward).
- Abundant time should be built into the pacing calendar for:
  - Students to discuss text (in-person or virtually).
  - The teacher to provide scaffolded support to mitigate text complexities.
  - Students to express their thinking with their peers.
  - Small-group instruction (in-person or virtually) to address unfinished learning and specific needs.
- It is important that teachers know where to invest their time and effort, what areas can be cut, and where they should teach only to awareness level to save time for priorities.
  - What is most important deserves more time, and teachers need to be given the latitude to provide responsive feedback and allow time for constructive struggle—a very different proposition than merely offering a superficial 'right' or 'wrong.' This additional time has to come from somewhere. In reviewing district grade-level standards curriculum leaders need to be asking not "what are the topics that need to be covered in this grade?" but "what is the importance or purpose of this topic?" (**https://bit.ly/2ZSkDUV**)

5. Consider Implications for Future Learning

Guiding Question: In what ways does the content extend into future content?

After finishing the pacing guide, take note of adjustments that will impact learning in SY 2021–22. The COVID-19 crisis has created a learning gap, and experience tells us it will be very difficult to completely close that gap in a single school year. It is important to look ahead to ensure that the decisions made in SY 2020–21 do not create more gaps or harm to priority groups of students.

Resources

- **Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures**
- **2020-2021 Priority Instructional Content in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics**

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