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Checklist for assessing existing English units of work



As educators, the task of crafting effective teaching sequences for students is paramount. Many teachers rely on existing units of work as the foundation for their planning, recognising the time saving advantage of using existing resources. However, ensuring that these units meet the standards of quality teaching and learning requires a critical eye and a systematic approach.

To assist you in this endeavour, this comprehensive checklist has been designed to highlight the key elements present in exemplary teaching sequences. This checklist serves as a tool to evaluate existing units of work, guiding you in assessing their efficacy and suitability for your specific context.

It is important to note that while existing units provide valuable frameworks, they often require adaptation to align with the unique needs of individual classrooms and students. Therefore, this checklist not only identifies essential features of quality teaching and learning but also assists you in determining whether a unit warrants adaptation for optimal use.

Before using this checklist, it is recommended that you thoroughly familiarise yourself with the texts/books and resources utilised in the existing unit. By then working through the checklist and engaging deeply with the content, you can accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning within the unit.

Your classroom context

YES NO

- Does the unit address the needs of your students based on their interests and background?
- Does the unit address the needs of your students based on assessment data?
- Do teaching and learning activities contain detail about the role of the teacher and students?
- Does the unit include suggestions for whole class, small group and independent organisation of learning?
- Does the unit need extensive adaptation based on initial evaluation?

Use of texts/books

YES NO

- Are chosen texts engaging for students?
- Is the genre of the chosen text/s identified and is it an explicit focus of the unit?
- Is the full potential of the chosen text(s) explored in the unit?

- Are the English and literacy concepts explored in the unit aligned with texts used in the unit?
- Are text and grammatical features that are prominent in chosen texts, the focus of the unit?
- Are grammar and vocabulary explicitly taught, with an emphasis on meaning, and are appropriate and correct examples selected from the chosen text(s) for discussion?

Literacy development

YES NO

- Does the unit have a clear, logical sequence to develop skills, knowledge and understanding through appropriate scaffolding?
- Is the role of the teacher clear throughout, for example, modelling, guiding or facilitating independent activities?
- Is a focus on oral language, reading and writing evident across the unit?
- Does the unit adequately build field knowledge to support both reading and writing?
- Is oral language drawn upon to develop response to texts and talk about language?
- Is deep discussion built into the unit to ensure discussion of both meaning and language choices and their effect?
- Are reading and writing integrated to show how writers make language choices for a purpose?

Reading

YES NO

- Is prior knowledge activated before reading?
- Is comprehension taught with a focus on literal, inferential and evaluative or critical literacy skills?
- Are grammar and vocabulary taught explicitly with a focus on meaning and discussion of examples selected from the chosen text (s)?
- Are students supported to draw on multiple sources of information when reading?

Writing

YES NO

- Is a clear purpose / genre and audience for writing made explicit?
- Is writing supported through the deconstruction of model or mentor texts?
- Is writing supported through joint construction before moving to independent construction of texts?
- Does grammar focus on both form and function in the context of chosen texts with links to developing writing?

Assessment

YES NO

- Are there opportunities for formative and summative assessment and observation of students during teaching and learning activities?
- Does assessment reflect the teaching and learning and provide useful information on achievement and future directions?