

Instructional Planning Activity: Unpack, Plan and Differentiate

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This planning activity is designed to help teachers unpack a U.S. History standard, identify the embedded Historical Thinking Skill, analyze the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), and design differentiated learning experiences. Whether used independently or as part of professional learning, the process models a systematic approach to standards-aligned instructional planning.

Step 1: Choose Your Standard

Select one indicator from the U.S. History and the Constitution standards. Copy and paste the full indicator into your working document.

Step 2: Unpack the Standard

In your own words, identify the following elements of the standard:

- **Key Concepts** (nouns, historical topics, ideas)
- **Key Skills** (verbs, what students should do)
- **Embedded Historical Thinking Skill** (use the indicator code and the Historical Thinking Skill reference chart provided in the South Carolina standards)

Step 3: Analyze the PLDs

Review the four performance levels (Does Not Meet Expectations, Minimally Meets Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Exceeds Expectations) for your chosen indicator.

Summarize what students are expected to do at each level.

After reviewing the PLDs, briefly explain how instructional supports, questioning, or task complexity would change as students progress from one performance level to the next.

Step 4: Write Learning Targets

Write one “I can...” statement for each of these levels:

- **Minimally Meets Expectations**
- **Meets Expectations**
- **Exceeds Expectations**

Make sure each target reflects both the content and the historical thinking skill.

Step 5: Design Tiered Tasks

Design a brief task or activity for each performance level:

- Entry-level support (Minimally Meets Expectations)
- Grade-level task (Meets Expectations)
- Extension/analysis (Exceeds Expectations)

Ensure each task aligns to the same grade-level standard while providing appropriate levels of support and challenge.

Planning Reflection

After completing this activity, consider:

- Which step of the unpacking process challenged your thinking the most?
- How did the PLDs influence the learning targets or tasks you designed?
- What changes will you make to your planning as a result of this process?