

FAQ Posed by SUSD Teachers on August 17, 2011

1. What should we consider when determining the 4-5 most important ideas for our students to learn?

While there are *many* important lessons SUSD students learn from our teachers, the 4-5 most important ideas that students are expected to learn per semester need to be selected from the state standards for each course/content area. Persons can access these standards on the AZ Department of Ed website at: <http://www.ade.az.gov/>

2. How do we submit what we identify are the 4-5 most important big ideas, per semester, that our students need to learn in our course/grade level?

Ideally (though not mandatory), it would work best if one person from each course/special area would agree to record these big ideas on a blank, SUSD curriculum map template. Blank templates can be found at:

<http://sUSD.curriculum.schoolfusion.us/modules/cms/pages.phtml?pageid=117383>

The District goal is to have a first draft of curriculum maps for both semesters by the end of each semester. Ideally, the maps will include 4-5 big ideas that students are expected to learn per semester in every course/special area.

(From a District level, we are planning to invite small groups of teacher leaders per course/content area to review/revise draft curriculum maps throughout the year, to allow this work to continue. Timelines and processes are being developed, now.)

3. How do we submit questions we believe are relevant to measure the big ideas/POs we have identified are most important for students to learn?

To build a bank of solid questions for common, end of course assessments in each course/special area, teachers are invited to submit questions by performance objective (PO).

Processes for teachers to submit questions are in the works and will be communicated to all teachers in September. For now, it is recommended that teachers draft questions until they can be submitted, beginning in October.

4. What do I do if I teach more than one content area/grade level?

Many of our teachers teach multiple content areas and grade levels. To allow our teachers to be successful in their work together this year, it is recommended that teachers:

- select just one course/grade level to focus on during the 2011-12 school year

- identify what's most important for students to learn using big ideas/concepts for that one course/grade level
- write and submit questions to assess (big idea) learning -- by PO.

5. How can we agree upon what to teach when we have diverse student populations, varied strengths and interests as educators, and different "schedules" across SUSD?

Agreeing on the most important 4-5 big ideas for students to learn (per semester) and creating banks of questions for common, end of course assessments ensures that ALL students receive similar learning experiences and opportunities across SUSD. However, this work is not intended to create lock-step instructional experiences for students (or teachers).

Well-written, common curriculum maps ensure rigorous and equitable learning experiences for students -- while providing teachers the autonomy to adjust instruction based on the readiness levels and interests of their students, and the resources they have available to them.

6. Does our work together during District or Site early releases count as "PLC hours" for this year? What are the expectations?

Yes.

In keeping with the plans to utilize Pay for Performance monies and emphasize job-embedded professional development (originally proposed by the SUSD Meet and Confer Team in the spring of 2010), all SUSD teachers are expected to participate in PLCs and/or collaborative learning opportunities with colleagues for a total of 36 hours during the 2011-12 school year.

All teachers will again be automatically credited with 30 hours of PD for their work in PLCs in May 2012 (as is consistent with the Pay for Performance Plan) unless administrators contact HR to indicate otherwise. The seven, SUSD Professional Development/Early Release Days "count" towards these 36 hours, as do 6 hours for all teachers present on August 4th and 5th. (Teachers will not see those first 6 hours on their MLP reports.)

For more information about working in PLCs this year, check out the PLC page on our district web page, under "employees" then "professional development" and then "PLCs" – or go to the following link:

http://plc.susd.curriculum.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/integrated_home.phtml?gid=1501483&sessionid=b89c0e23f30278e6132be2a54fbca802

7. Where can I go to learn more about how to write good assessment items (MC, short answer, performance or rubric-based, etc.) to submit for consideration for the common, end of course assessments we are developing?

Teachers can contact any of our SUSD Curriculum Specialists, Dr. Dave McNeil or Dr. Anne Hansen for support.

Online resources include:

Designing Tests Questions

<http://www.utc.edu/Administration/WalkerTeachingResourceCenter/FacultyDevelopment/Assessment/test-questions.html>

Test Designer

http://www.testdesigner.com/about/how_to_write_good_test_questions/

Test Guide

<http://www.uleth.ca/edu/runte/tests/>

How to Write Better Tests

http://www.indiana.edu/~best/write_better_tests.shtml

Writing and Reviewing Assessment Items: Guidelines and Tips

<http://www.unc.edu/~painter/docs/TestPreparation.pdf>

8. Where can I go to learn more about SB 1040?

Check out the following resources:

<http://www.scottsdalesea.com/Archive/ARIZONA%20FRAMEWORK%20ppt%20from%20webinar.pdf>

<http://www.scottsdalesea.com/Archive/Final%20Task%20Force.pdf>

<http://www.scottsdalesea.com>

Contact Dr. Anne Hanson (ahanson@susd.org) or Dr. Dave McNeil (DMcNeil@susd.org) if you have additional questions.