UNWRAPPING THE STANDARDS

A Powerful Illustration
Unwrapping the standards is a simple process that makes standards manageable.

Forsyth County Schools has received professional development focused on selecting district priority standards for each grade level and content area. This process will provide a foundation for the creation of Common Formative and Engaging Classroom Assessments.

Unwrapping standards is a proven technique that help teachers and leaders identify from the full text of the standards exactly what they need to teach their students. The process provides additional clarity as to what students must know and be able to do. When we take the time to analyze each standard and identify its essential concepts and skills, the result is more effective instructional planning, assessment, and student learning.

This newsletter focuses on the unwrapping process and how it is connected with Common Formative Assessments and Data Teams.

EXAMPLE OF UNWRAPPED STANDARD

Graphic Organizer
“Unwrapping” Number Computation

Concepts: Need to Know About Number Computation

Number Sense
• Three digit whole numbers
• Simple fractions

Number Systems and Their Properties
• Simple fractions (fourths, thirds, halves)
• Three digit whole numbers
• Place value
• Properties

Estimation
• Numerical estimation
• Whole numbers to 999
• Simple fractions
• Money

Skills: BE ABLE TO DO

• USE (numerical/computational concepts and procedures
• DEMONSTRATE (number sense, simple fractions, 3 digit whole numbers)
• RECOGNIZE (number system properties)
• APPLY (estimation with whole numbers to 999, fractions, money, number system properties)
• EXPLAIN (number system properties)

Topics or Content:
• Variety of problem solving situations using manipulatives

How to “Jump Start” the Unwrapping Process:

Step 1: Select Your Standards to Unwrap
The first questions that usually arises is, “How many standards and indicators should we choose?”

Let’s keep it simple at first. Choose one priority standard with which you are familiar and “unwrap” it. After you become comfortable with the process, you can select more.

Step 2: Underline Nouns, Circle Verbs
Read through your selected standard and underline the key concepts (important nouns and noun phrases) and circle the skills (the verbs).

The concepts are the what the students must know and the skills are what they must be able to do.

You can also use two different colored highlighters or pens to highlight concepts in one color and the skills in another.

Step 3: Create a Graphic Organizer
The graphic organizer represents the standard in it’s “unwrapped” state. You can create an outline (see above) or a bulleted list. The next step is to organize the identified concepts and skills in a way that makes most sense to you.

If we do this thoroughly, we can set aside the state standards document knowing that our graphic organizers represent everything students need to know and be able to do!
Part of Common Formative Assessment training involves a section focused on unwrapping Common Core priority standards. Within those standards are key understandings or “Big Ideas”. Big Ideas are statements of understanding that students derive from a particular unwrapped standard. Think back when you were in school....have you ever experienced an “ah-ha” moment? Usually this occurs when you make a connection and draw conclusions about what you were learning. Many times, these “ah-ha” moments result in a concept that you still retain today, even if you’ve forgotten many of the details. When we endure key understandings, we’ve experienced a Big Idea!

Here are four suggested examples of Big Ideas related to Grade 6 Math Standards. They represent foundational understandings students need to have with regard to mathematical measurement.

**Suggested Big Ideas from “Unwrapped” Grade 6 Math Standard and Indicators**

1. Understanding how to use common units of measure is a necessary math skill applicable to all areas of life.
2. Mathematical formulas provide shortcuts for verifying estimates and solving problems.
3. Standard and metric units of measure can be used interchangeably in daily applications.
4. Measurement strategies and tools can be used to solve problems involving geometric shapes.

**Writing Essential Questions**

Essential questions are written to match the Big Ideas. They represent what you believe students should know. Essential Questions focus instruction on the “unwrapped” standards, align instruction with assessment, and lead students to the discovery of the Big Ideas on their own.

Writing Essential Questions are very much apart of the instructional planning process. The goal is for students to be able to respond to the Essential Questions with their own Big Idea statements. Here’s how it all fits together:

- The knowledge students gain from the unwrapped concepts and skills provide them with Big Ideas.
- Big Ideas are the answers to the Essential questions.
- Essential Questions are derived from unwrapped priority standards.

**We now have a solid foundation for Common Formative Assessments!**

This newsletter is designed to heighten awareness about the powerful practice of unwrapping standards. What students should know and be able to do are critical areas when implementing the Common Core State Standards. Unwrapped standards help students to attain important “Big Ideas.”

**Data Team Questions**

1. What is it we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?

**Common Formative Assessments**

Common Formative Assessments are periodic or interim assessments, collaboratively designed by grade-level or course teams of teachers, and administered to all students in a grade level or course several times during the quarter, semester, trimester, or entire school year.

**Assessment Literacy**

- **Large-scale assessment:**
  - Developed outside the school or district
  - Summative only
- **Small-scale assessment:**
  - Developed within the school or district
  - Formative or summative
  - Results provide **timely feedback**
- **Norm-referenced assessment:**
  - Standardized tests
  - Individual or group performance compared to **performance of a larger group**
- **Criterion-referenced assessment:**
  - State or district test aligned to state and/or district standards
  - Used to determine how well students have acquired a specific set of learning outcomes

**FROM THE EDITOR**

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**The Leadership and Learning Center**

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