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Backwards Planning & Lesson Classification

Planning and Design for Flexible Path and Pacing

About this resource

This resource includes two templates that set the foundation for effective and successful implementation of flexible pacing and/or flexible paths in your classroom.

1. Backwards Planning

Effective flexible pacing begins with the end. In other words, it is only possible if you start by planning using backwards design: identifying what students will know and be able to do at the end of the parameters you set.

Whether you want to provide flexibility within an entire course, an entire unit, or just a single concept, you must first identify the final learning or skill goals and then identify and plan the learning experiences that build to mastery of that final goal.

2. Activity/Lesson Classification

Allowing students to work at the pace that is appropriate for them means that some students will, naturally, move through activities and lessons more quickly than others. This means that you need to decide in advance which lessons are essential for achieving mastery and which are extensions that allow for students to deepen their understanding.

Modern Classrooms Project has developed and broadly shared a classification framework that guides teachers in making these choices and communicating them to students: the "Must-Do, Should-Do, and Aspire-to-Do" framework. Other forms of this kind of classification use terminology like "Core and Choice" or "Must-Do and May-Do," but the principle with each is largely the same.

Use this template to plan and categorize the lessons, activities, and formative assessments that students may complete as they work toward mastery of the learning or skill goals identified.

- **Must-do:** essential for achieving mastery of learning or skill goals; required for every student
- **Should-do:** useful for developing mastery; provide additional practice or ask students to apply their understanding in a different way
- **Aspire-to-do:** extensions that allow for students to pursue interests or passions, or to deepen or apply their understanding

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Backwards Planning

*The parameters or boundaries of your planning (one week versus an entire unit plan) determine the breadth of desired results, amount of acceptable evidence, and number of learning events that you need to identify in your plans.

Step 1: Desired Results
Learning and/or Skill Goal(s)

Important to know and do: *what knowledge and skills should participants master?*	**Enduring understanding:** *what are big ideas and important understandings participants should retain?*

Step 2: Artifacts or Acceptable Evidence

How will I know if students have achieved the desired results?	*What will I accept as evidence of student understanding and mastery?*

Step 3: Key Learning Events and Instruction (Learning Plan)

What foundational knowledge (facts, concepts, principles) and skills will students need in order to demonstrate mastery of the learning and skill goals?	*What activities will provide students with the opportunities to gain knowledge and skills?*
What will need to be instructed or shared, and how should it best be taught, in light of learning and mastery goals?	*What materials and resources will best help students to achieve these goals?*

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Activity/Lesson Classification

*The number of each type of activity depends on the learning and skill goals you have set as well as the parameters or boundaries of your planning.

Activity or Lesson Type	Activity Name and Brief Description
Must-do *Necessary or essential to achieve mastery of learning or skill goals, these activities are required for every student.*	• • • • •
Should-do *Useful for developing mastery, these activities provide additional practice or ask students to apply their understanding in a different way.*	• • • • •
Aspire-to-do *Providing a challenge, these activities ask students to deepen or extend their understanding.*	• • • • •

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