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Curriculum Design

Developing Thematic/ Concept based Units

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Why Organize Curriculum in Thematic Units?

- Natural way to “chunk” curriculum
- Provides a thematic focus for students: continuity and connections, across concepts and languages
- Allows for an authentic, literature-based focus
- Makes content PERSONALLY relevant

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How to do it...

- Themes/Concepts must lend themselves to inter-disciplinary study
- Concepts must be broad enough for in-depth exploration, but narrow enough to be constrained to a reasonable amount of time
- Specific learner objectives for each discipline must already be defined, then grouped by unit



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Concept-based Themes vs. Topics

Topics:

- Colors and Fruits
- Weather
- Body parts
- Pets
- Shapes
- Things in my classroom

C. B. Themes:

- Who am I at home and at school
- Living things are all around me
- We are similar to and different from Mexico

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After Concept/Theme Is Selected:



- Sketch out main ideas, concepts, skills, facts students need to master
- Look for natural categories or units (topics!) of organization within the theme
- Develop a CONCEPT MAP (example soon), incorporating ALL content students are expected to master

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For Example:

- *Who I am at home and school*
 - I am a student
 - I am a friend
 - I am a family member
- Now you think of some possible themes!

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Key Criteria



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- When planning units, be sure to incorporate as many disciplines as possible
- Not all content may “fit” within a unit--sticking with a “theme” is not necessarily a mandate, just a guideline. *Student needs override all.*

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Concept Mapping

Go deeper than ever before....

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What Is a Concept Map?



- A map is a graphic organizer that displays a large concept or theme from a big-picture perspective
- A concept map uses concepts or ideas and shows how they connect: using language
- A concept map is developed first by teachers, THEN done with students—of all ages!

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Concept Mapping: a sample



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The POWER of Mapping...

- Students contribute to its formation
- Visuals combine with language for a concrete representation of abstract concepts and ideas
- Fun! Student-centered!
- Develops vocabulary; appropriate for all levels
- Extends to writing activities...More!

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Also remember:

- **Concept-based units require attention to the concepts—through books and *meaningful* discussion**
- **Mapping and planning are best done in a small group**
- **Have objectives for students outlined beforehand (and a teacher who has taught the content before and is familiar with it).**



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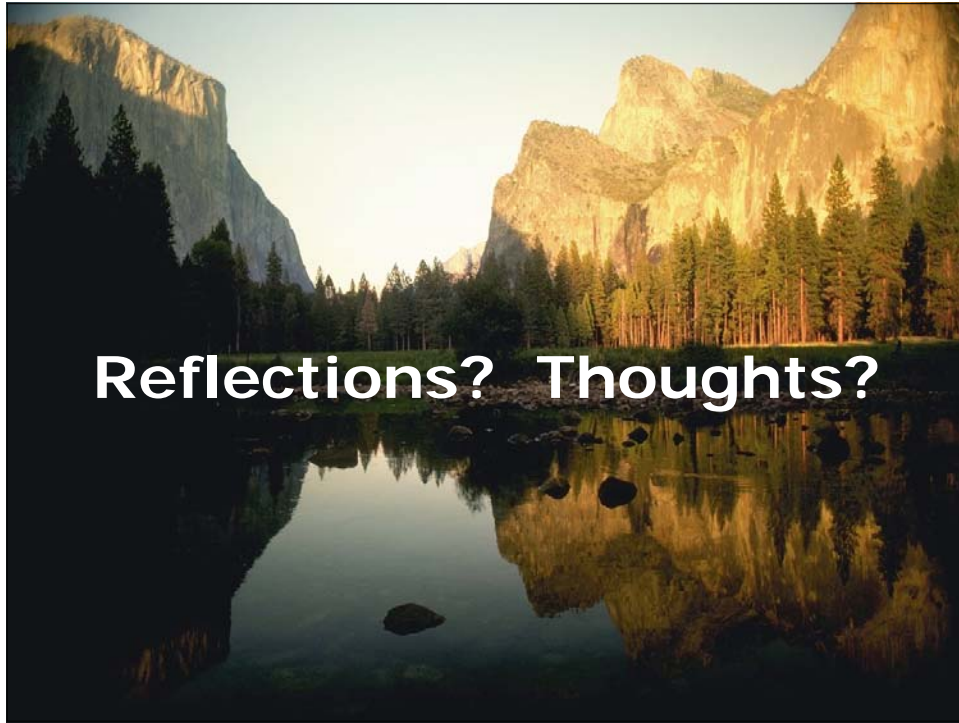
Challenges With Thematic Curriculum

Challenges:

- **Finding related BOOKS!!**
- **Finding quality and authentic materials**
- **Using/following curriculum; Sequence of delivery can't always mirror intended sequence**

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