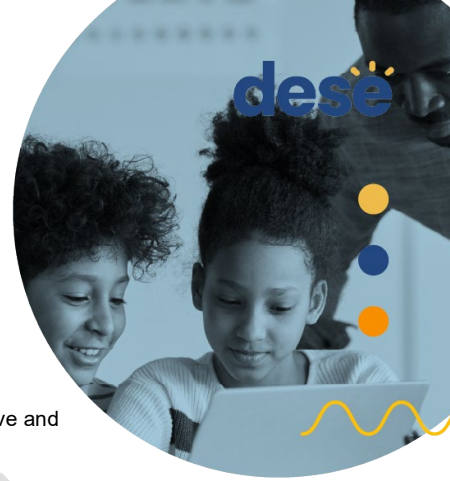# Instructional Planning Tools Guidance

DESE Instructional Planning and Observation Tools Collection | Pilot Version 2024-2025

Guiding Question

How can intentional planning help me facilitate **deeper learning** for all students and provide equitable access to grade-level, real-world, interactive, and relevant work?

About the Tools Collection

The Instructional Planning Tools were developed to support continuous improvements of evidence-based, inclusive and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that advance the student goals of the DESE Educational Vision:

As a result of their public education in Massachusetts, students will:	What it looks like in a classroom:
• Attain academic knowledge and skills. • Understand and value themselves and others. • Engage with the world.	• All students are known and valued. • Learning experiences are relevant, real world, and interactive. • Individualized supports enable students to excel at grade level and beyond.

Use of planning tools supports effective teacher and administrator practices that promote equity and deeper learning.

Three tools have been developed to support educators' instructional planning and skillful implementation of high-quality instructional materials. They are best used in a cycle.

Tool Purposes and Planning Cycle

Tool	When to Use	Purposes	Key Questions
Unit Unpacking	Prior to teaching a curricular unit	• Understand goals and targeted content, language, and practice standards of a curricular unit • Reflect on and mitigate adult biases • Understand the specific strengths and weaknesses of the unit materials and determine ways to adapt materials to meet specific needs of your students • Plan for student access, engagement, and individualized support that cultivates deeper learning	1. What are students learning in this unit and why? How will we know they have learned it? 2. How does this unit recognize, center, and affirm diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences? 3. How can our facilitation of this unit cultivate deeper learning and increase all students' capacity as independent learners?
Lesson Internalization	Prior to teaching a lesson; used multiple times within a unit	• Understand goals and targeted content, language, and practice standards of a lesson, and how they support unit goals • Reflect on and mitigate adult biases • Understand the specific strengths and weaknesses of the lesson materials, and determine ways to adapt materials to meet specific needs of your students • Plan for student access, engagement, and individualized support that cultivates deeper learning	1. What are students learning in this lesson and why? How will we know they have learned it? 2. How does this lesson recognize, center, and affirm diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences? 3. How can our facilitation of this lesson cultivate deeper learning and increase all students' capacity as independent learners? 4. What will students experience in this lesson?
Looking at Student Work	After teaching a lesson and/or concluding a unit; used multiple times within a unit	• Determine students' progress, strengths, and opportunities for growth based on grade-level content, language, and practice standards • Reflect on and shift instructional practice • Determine next steps to support student learning	1. What are our expectations for grade-level student work for this lesson and task? 2. To what extent did students meet the grade-level learning goals of the lesson? 3. What will we do to both shift our instructional practice and address specific areas for growth in student learning?

Key Considerations

1. These tools are designed to support skillful implementation of instructional materials through evidence-based practices that are inclusive and culturally and linguistically sustaining, to ensure the enacted curriculum engages all students in deeper learning through equitable access to grade-level, real-world, interactive, and relevant work.

   - The instructional planning tools are not meant to support the creation of instructional materials or replace lesson planning. The protocols are designed to structure robust conversations around curriculum and instruction that deepen effective practice, strengthen cross-team alignment, and support skillful implementation of materials.

   - These tools are best used when starting with high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). For guidance on identifying instructional materials that have been rated "high quality," review CURATE ratings and reports. In disciplines where CURATE ratings or reports are not provided, refer to the discipline-specific CURATE rubrics or contact the DESE staff for your content area.

   - These tools can be used to support phases three and four of IMplement MA: Launch and Implement & Monitor and are designed to support educators' curriculum literacy, specifically enacting curriculum and adjusting practice.

2. Before using these Instructional Planning Tools, educators should understand the broader goals, scope and sequence, and routines of their course and curriculum.

3. These tools are best used when educators and instructional leaders are aligned on a shared vision of effective instruction. The Standards of Effective Practice, Observation Tool, and the Deeper Learning Guidance Tool can be used as resources to align on the components of effective instruction that support the equity-centered DESE Educational Vision.

4. These tools should be used as part of an ongoing cycle of professional learning and development (i.e., observation and feedback, coaching, professional development, etc.).

   - To support learning, teams may need to make strategic decisions about how much time to spend on each section of the protocol(s) and where teams might need additional learning, based on school and/or district priorities, student assets and needs, the expertise of teachers participating, and the time allotted.

5. The Unit Unpacking tool and then "Collaborative Deep Dive" versions of the Lesson Internalization and Looking at Student Work tools are best used as a team with a predetermined facilitator and with grade-level specialists (i.e., Special Education teachers, ESL teachers, interventionists, etc.). The "Everyday" versions of the Lesson Internalization and Looking at Student Work tools can be used independently by individual educators to support daily instructional practice.

6. It is recommended that while engaging with these tools, educators take notes in a way that supports their understanding and implementation of action steps (i.e., on unit materials, in a notebook, etc.).