

DODGE CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL
Grade Level Professional Learning Communities
Activity Guide: August 29, 2012



This week's focus for grade level PLC does will include a review of **Common Core Unit, one in both ELA and math.** During the scheduled session please review essential questions, discuss student centered instructional strategies, materials being used and unit starting points. Social studies and science teachers, during this session, should spend 20 minutes in Common Core discussing the essential questions in unit one and 20 minutes on how to incorporate the essential questions into the current pacing guide. During your session, two talking points should be considered. These two talking points are outlined in Part One of this guide.

PART ONE (Spend twenty minutes discussing the following two statements.)

- Discuss how much time you are providing in direct instruction. Remember that student centered instruction allows more student talk and less teacher talk.
- Identify all essential questions for unit one. (Remember that the goal at the end of each unit is to have students answer all of the essential questions.) Discuss how these questions can be incorporated into the Five Kinds of Teacher Thinking.

PART TWO

Please spend 20 minutes discussing the following question. What is an essential question and why is it important? Before you begin the discussion, read the following artifact defining the purpose of an essential question.

- The essential questions are the driving focus behind each unit. Each essential question supports the type of instructional delivery as it refocuses the attention on what is important about the unit. For example, an essential question built into a particular unit might be "How does the author's development of theme or central idea contribute to our understanding of life?" As an important element for learning within the unit, the statement becomes the introductory clause for each lesson until a new essential question is introduced. The teacher would consistently and periodically state to the class, "In today's lesson, we are going to further explore ways that authors develop a theme or central idea to help us understand life." The restatement of the essential question or theme of the unit then drives instruction, authentic task and formative assessment for a particular unit of study.

Defining Levels of Learning

From the essential question, the teacher would develop levels of learning that mirror the success criteria for each essential question. For example, in Common Core unit one, the essential question is plotted next to the success criteria and entitled “How good is good enough?” To get to the levels of learning you must first identify the success criteria that answer the essential question. For example the teacher should develop levels of learning in terms of rubrics that answer the question, “How good is good enough?”

- How good is good enough when I read text and identify the theme or central idea in my own words?
- How good is good enough when I cite specific details from the text through the interpretation of a theme or central idea of a story?
- How good is good enough when I am given a text to analyze the development of theme or central idea?
- How good is good enough when I am given a text to use supporting details to summarize objectively?

NEXT WEEK'S FOLLOW UP

Next week I will be asking each of you to post your essential questions as introductory statements to your daily lesson. These statements should remain on the board until all students have a clear understanding of the concepts for which they will be held accountable. We will also begin developing levels of learning rubrics that support the essential questions within a Common Core Unit of study.

Resources

[Essential Questions](#)