

Yearlong Planning During the Summer

Summer is a time to relax and rejuvenate. I can remember my summers as a teacher. Along with vacation fun, I used a little of my summer days to plan the courses I was going to teach in the fall.

Yearlong planning involves choices. Imagine you could take a nine-month flight around the world, landing as many times as you'd like. How would you do it? Would you see dozens of places or pick a few favorite spots?

The choices for such a trip are a little like the decisions teachers make when we plan a course for the first time. Many state and national standards suggest each course covers a huge amount of terrain, a little like taking a world tour at 10,000 feet. We see the sites, but the towns and cities look awfully small from such a height. Even if we touch down for a day or two we are tourists quickly passing through.

It is better to land for longer visits, letting students really see the sites, talk to the locals and get a feel for the culture. When we do fast flyovers and quick landings, nothing is very memorable. Rather than plowing through the entire textbook and treating every detail in the standards with equal weight, land the plane 8 to 10 times in a yearlong course. Create well-designed 3 to 4 week units your students will really remember.

Begin planning the year by identifying each of your units. Feel free to use the [Yearlong Planning Template](#) I designed for this purpose. In addition to picking your standards and social science content, decide what [reading](#), [writing](#), and [discussion](#) skills you want emphasize in each unit. Brainstorm a variety of lessons that will be instructive and engaging. Finally, figure out what types of [assessments](#) you'll use, including objective tests, writing assignments or performance based assessments to measure what your students learned.

You may change your yearlong plan, making some units longer and others shorter, perhaps even eliminating a unit or two. However, you'll have a much better flight if you start with a reasonable itinerary. Most importantly, you will create a more memorable journey for your students.

