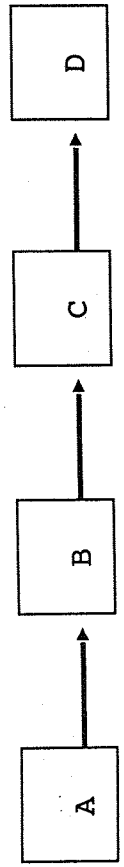
C. Diagram Your Course

Now that you have analyzed your Dream List, placing all items into categories, it is time to begin to order the units into a coherent course. An effective technique for this purpose is to use diagrams as the intermediate step between the analyzed Dream List and the course syllabus. Diagrams transform the ideal found in the Dream List into a structure from which the syllabus can be created. Once this technique is learned, most faculty find that diagramming is more effective than a standard outline, because one can quickly diagram many variations of the same course as new ideas come up. Many professors sit down with a pad of scrap paper, quickly moving from one diagram to the next as they search for one that seems to meet their needs and dreams.

The basic point here is to use boxes or circles to represent parts of your course, connecting them with arrows. You can label as much as you need, since these diagrams are simply for your own purposes. Some college teachers have shown these to their students, however, at the beginning of the course, to give them an overall feel for how the course will be structured. The diagrams seem to communicate better and faster than just a course outline in the normal, written form. It is important to remember, however, that there are no set, hard-and-fast rules here, as in computer flow charts. Use what works for you.

For example, suppose you have four major Core content areas: A, B, C, and D. You could diagram them as in Figure 1 on page 90.

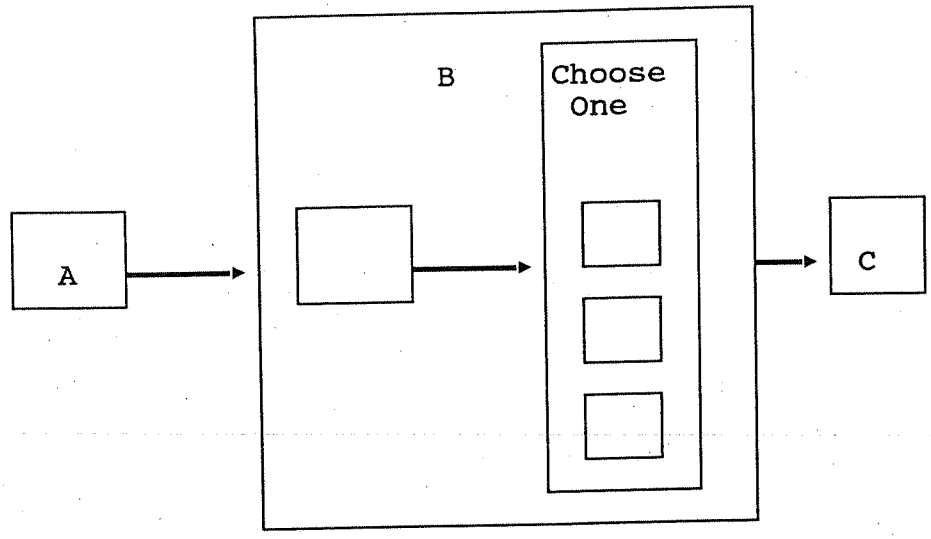


Core Content Items
Figure 1

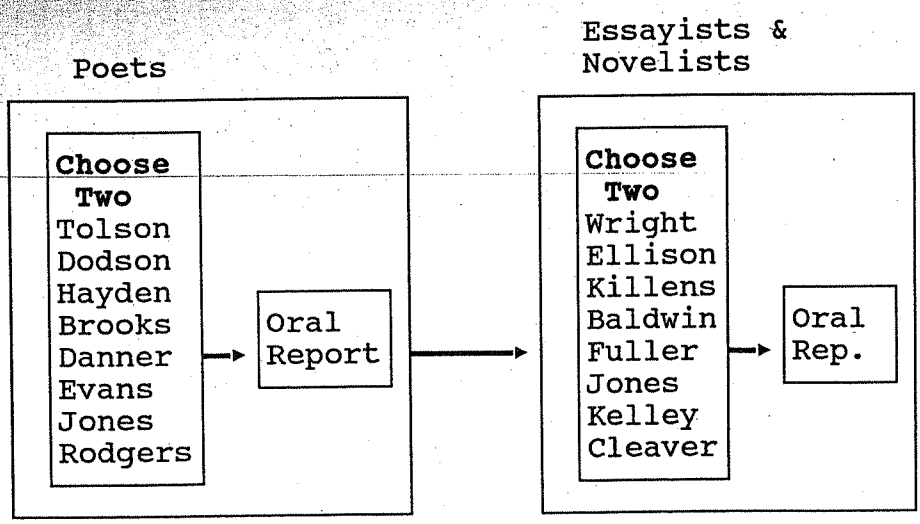
Suppose, on the other hand, you have three major Core content areas which students must master, but the second one has a variety of applications or examples among which students could choose based on their interests. You could diagram this situation as in Figure 2.

A real example might illustrate the importance and value of providing Choices in your courses, and show how the addition of Choices allows you to accomplish much more than you had ever dreamed possible. Figure 3 demonstrates the situation of an Introduction to American Literature course. Clearly, if all relevant literature is to be covered, this course might require a year rather than the one semester you have for it. The problem, then, is to come up with some way to maximize the coverage of good literature, while still maintaining a one-semester course. The diagram in Figure 3 focuses on a Core area of such a course, Afro-American Literature, and suggests a model for solving this dilemma using Choices. Notice how the use of Choices allows students to read four writers in depth, while being exposed to twenty-two.

Ordinarily, you might begin this Core with an introductory lecture or discussion on the topic of the general place of Afro-American literature in American culture, or an advance organizer focusing on common and divergent themes in this literature. This could be diagrammed similarly to the Core in the B unit in Figure 2. In place of the oral reports, you might arrange for debates or similar in-class exercises designed for synthetic, analytic, and evaluative learning of the whole corpus. A simple box to the right of this diagram would denote the end of this Core, which might be an essay



Cores and Choices
Figure 2



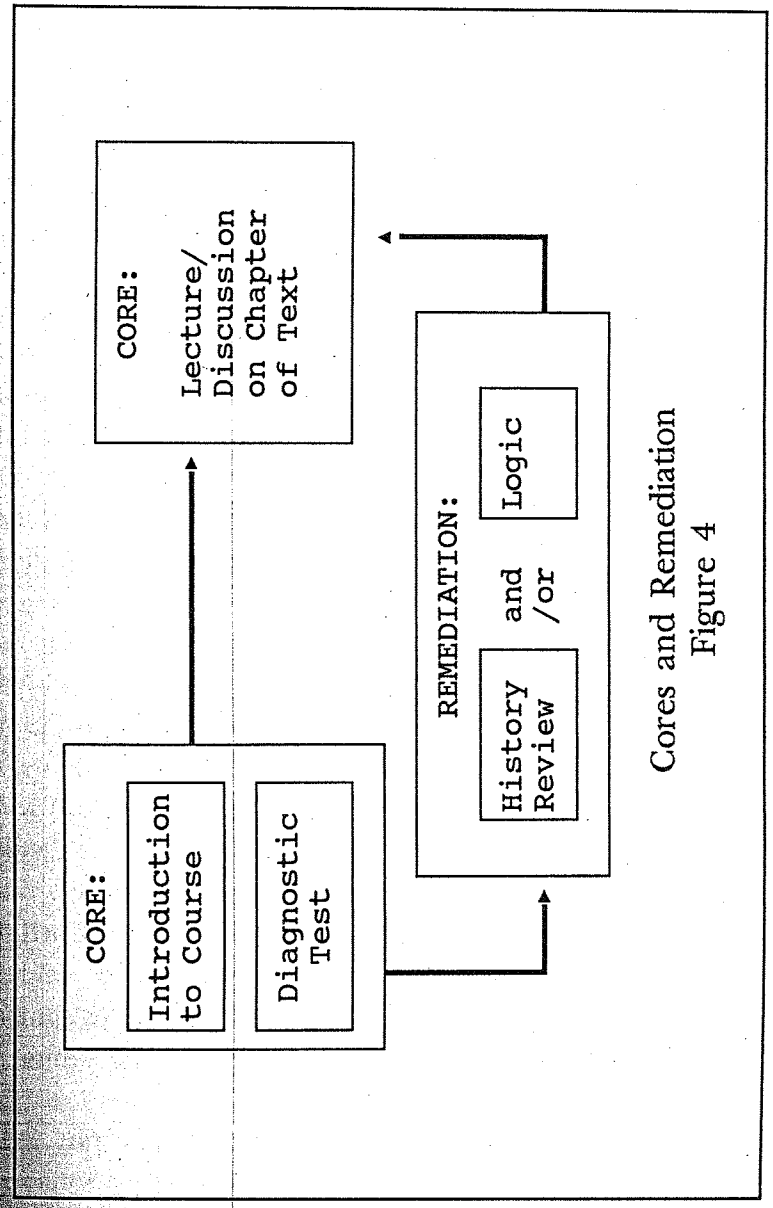
Choices: Modern Afro-American Literature
Figure 3

exam requiring students to know more than the four writers they read, thereby encouraging active listening of the reports or debates.

We encourage you to review *Designing and Improving Courses and Curricula in Higher Education* by Robert Diamond. Chapters 5 and 6, especially, contain numerous case studies and diagrams that further illustrate the use of diagramming for course and curriculum planning. For example, students enrolled in the Introduction to the Study of Religion course (pages 82 and 83 of the Diamond book) are required to choose one unit from each of three lists, but can receive extra credit for choosing more.

In the next example, shown in Figure 4, we demonstrate the introductory module of a course which includes an introductory lecture, a diagnostic pre-test, two Remediation units for students who have demonstrated a deficiency on the pre-test, and the first unit of real content, a Core item. Notice that some students, on the basis of the diagnostic test in history and logic, move right into the first Core, and read Chapter 1. Other students, because of their performance on the diagnostic test, need a history review, a mini-course in logic, or both. Compare our diagram with the one for Economics 201 on page 81 of the Diamond book.

Enrichments could be diagrammed like Remediation in the above example, although for consistency in the diagram they might be better placed above the Core. Suppose, for example, you are teaching a general education course in the social sciences. You have decided that some form of computer-assisted data analysis is a Core component of the course. Some students, however, because of their curricula,

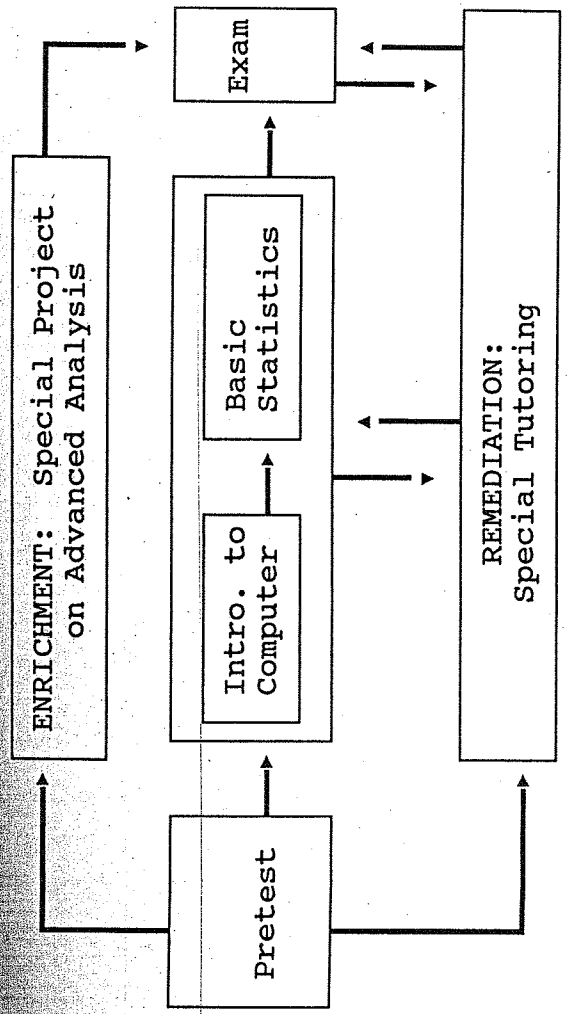


Cores and Remediation
Figure 4

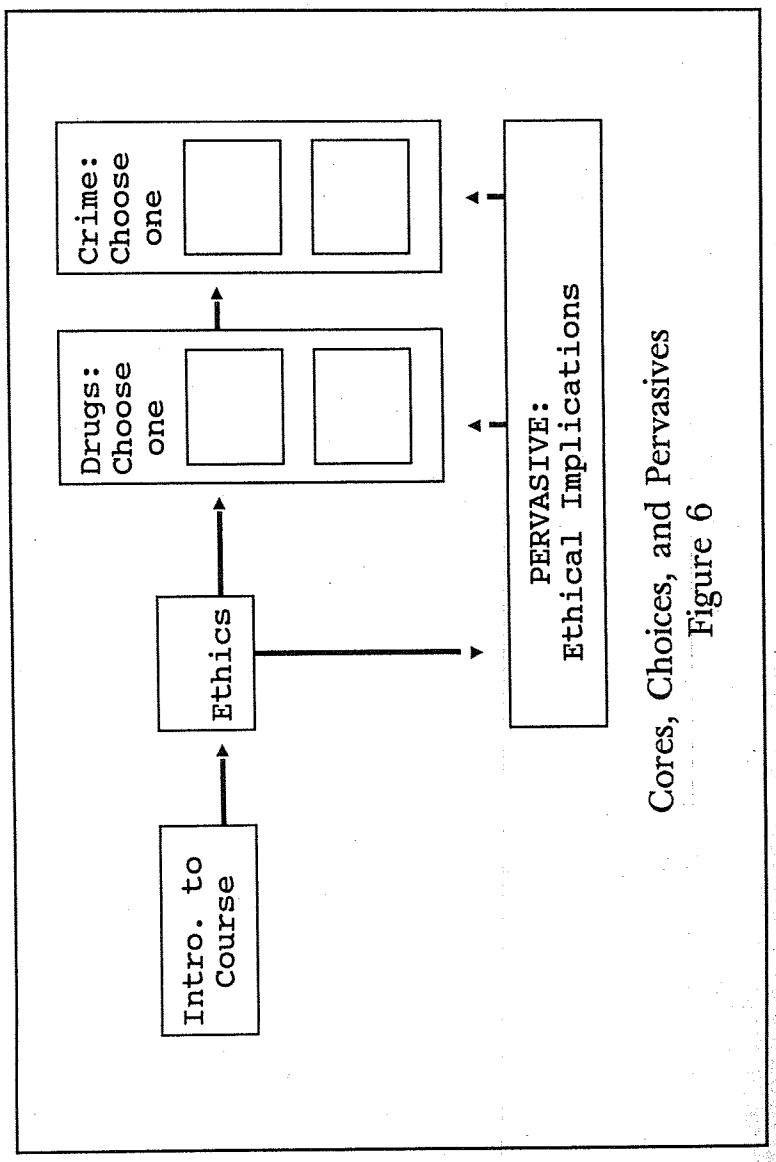
already are proficient at this task. What will you do with them while you teach the rest of the class? If you have them sit through lessons and assignments regarding things they already know, it will bore them and they could become a disruptive force in the class. To excuse them entirely from the two-week period of the course, however, is cheating them and threatens their commitment to the course. Figure 5 suggests one answer to the dilemma.

This example illustrates the provision of an Enrichment for those students who know the material in the Core, as well as Remediation for others who fail to demonstrate competence on either the Core learning or the examination. These students would then get a second chance to demonstrate their learning and/or retake the exam. Notice also we have allowed for the possibility that those students whom we exempted from the core learning might need remediation on their work as well. The awareness that this Remediation possibility might be needed was not initially considered, but emerged from the diagramming process itself. As another example of enrichment, Diamond shows a diagram of a Master's Degree Program in Management which includes an enrichment component on page 92 of his book.

Pervasives can also be included in these diagrams, with their primary purpose being to help us remember to include these ideas or concepts in all components of the course. Suppose you are teaching a general education science course, and wish to emphasize throughout the course the ethics of scientific research. Ethics, then, is a Core item to be introduced and discussed early in the semester, but then becomes a Pervasive as you reinforce the points and indicate



Cores, Remediation, and Enrichment
Figure 5



Cores, Choices, and Pervasives
Figure 6

the importance of ethics in all the other Core subjects. The diagram might look like that in Figure 6.

Now it is time for you to try the technique of diagramming on your course. *First, pull out the Core items from your analyzed Dream List, and diagram them on the next worksheet to determine a broadly defined sequence of content. We have provided you with two templates for this exercise, but feel free to use more of your own paper as you experiment with various alternative sequences.*

Diagram of Cores

Diagram of Cores

Now consider Remediation. Do all students have the background to learn each Core, or will some need Remediation before they can proceed? If you expect they do not, are there some Remediation items on your Dream List which could be usefully added here? Try diagramming them following the models shown above. If there are no Remediation items on your Dream List, consider whether you need to place them there. If so, add them and then integrate them into your diagram. If you do not know if the students will have the background, consider a short pre-test at the beginning of each Core. Diagram this pre-test in, following the models shown above. *Look at your Dream List and diagram all the Remediation items into your course on the two-page worksheet. Again, use more sheets of your own paper as you experiment with alternative diagrams.*

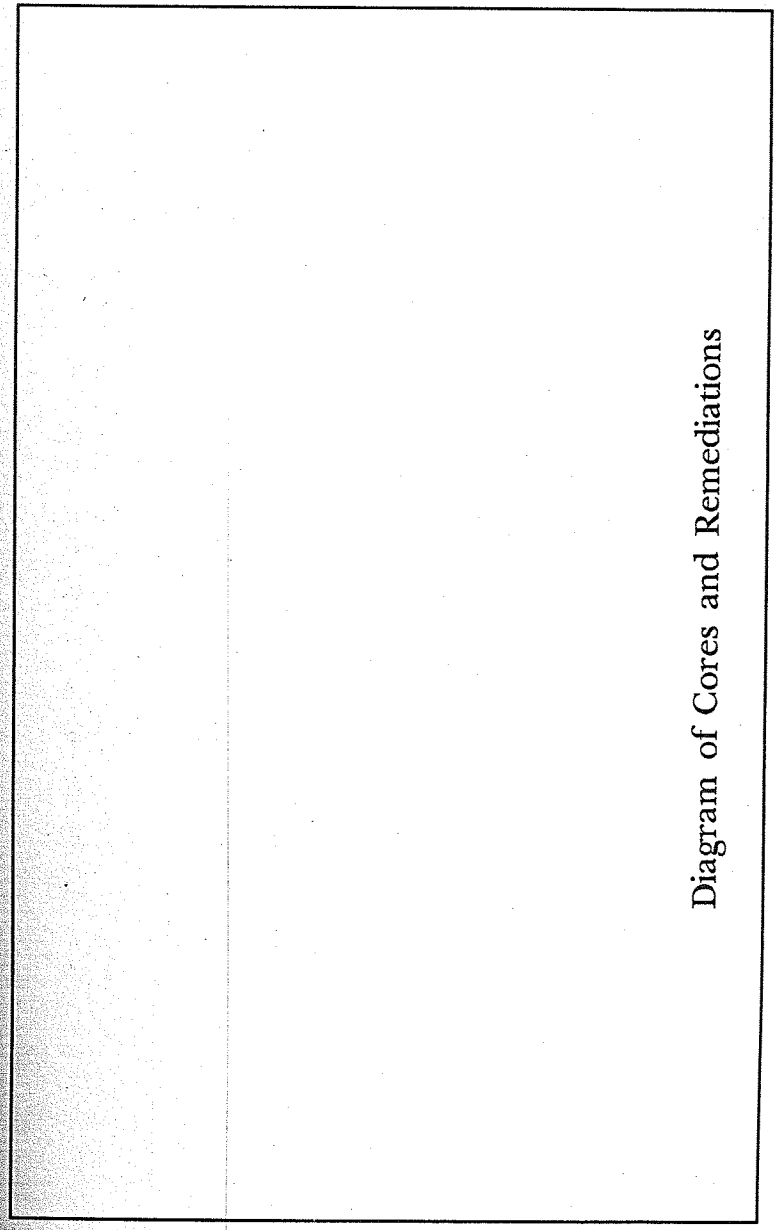


Diagram of Cores and Remediations

Diagram of Cores and Remediations

What about Enrichment items on your Dream List? Do they seem to have a natural place in your course diagram? Can they be integrated into the course as Enrichments for certain Cores? Perhaps these could be seen as extra credit options. Maybe you could even require every student to complete a set of Enrichments. *Fit the Enrichments into your course diagram on the next two-page worksheet, but again, do not be constrained by an artificial two-page limit.*

Diagram of Cores, Remediations, and Enrichments

Diagram of Cores, Remediations, and Enrichments

Now consider the Choice items from your Dream List. Are several of them actually different methods of achieving the same objective? Perhaps you could integrate the Choices into the course diagram by providing students with the option of choosing one or two assignments, among several. Are several Choice items actually different topics for students to study, all within a broader, general topic? Is it reasonable to make the general topic a Core, and provide students with Options or Choices of topics within the Core?

Look back to your Course Description, reviewing who the students in your course are and what their probable interests will be. If the course is to be successful for all students, their interests and purposes for taking the course need to be respected. Can you now envision choices for your Dream List you could not imagine before? Do not be afraid to enrich your Dream List from your course diagram. *Work back and forth, developing each one from the other. Answer these kinds of questions while you integrate the Choice items from your Dream List into your course.* Notice that you can include a large number of Choices in your course. When you plan for student reports back to the whole class, the use of Choices results in opening more time in the semester, allowing you to cover more content than you dreamed possible. *Diagram the Choices into your course diagram on the next two-page worksheet, but again, experiment on your own paper with more than just two alternatives.*

Diagram of Cores, Remediations, Enrichments, and Choices

Diagram of Cores, Remediations, Enrichments, and Choices

Now look at the Pervasives from your analyzed Dream List. If they are truly to be Pervasives, they need to be integrated into every segment of the course. Often Pervasives are values, appreciations, or central ideas. *You need to diagram them in on the next two-page worksheet to make sure you attend to them throughout the course.* Let the Pervasives in your diagram act as an additional conscience, tugging you back to your Dream List, as you continue in the course planning process.

Work through several design possibilities for your course by quickly diagramming them on succeeding sheets of your own paper. Play with various contingencies. Allow your preconceived ideas about what is Enrichment, Choice, Core, Remediation, and Pervasive to change as you work through several different ways to organize your course. Consider sacrificing some content for the addition of skills and attitudes. This is a hard step to take, but it might be worth it.

Look back at your Dream List. Is everything on that list in your diagram? Probably not, but you likely have more in your course than you originally thought possible. Experiment still further with your course to try to get even more in.

Show your diagram to your colleagues. What suggestions are made or occur to you as you explain it? *Incorporate them.*

Diagram of Cores, Remediations,
Enrichments, Choices, and Pervasives

Diagram of Cores, Remediations, Enrichments, Choices, and Pervasives

D. Work Out the Timing

You are now at the point when you can begin to plan tentatively how much time you will need for each broad section of the course. Pick the first section of the course. How much time will you and the students need to complete it? Move on to the other sections and ask yourself the same question. Then tally up the time to see how close to the semester you have come. If you have more time available to you, great! Look back to your Dream List and course diagram. Consider making some Enrichments into Cores; allow more time for Choices; reconsider Remediations; expand some content areas; provide time for individual or group work on projects.

If you have gone beyond the confines of the time available to you, that is great too! First, consider whether the course you are planning can be expanded into a larger time period. Is it appropriate to teach this course over two semesters, rather than one? Is this question a liberating one? Do you begin to see Options you had not considered before? Great! This is, after all, the course you want to teach! Consider the political and bureaucratic moves required to accomplish this, and get started.

If you cannot justify more time or an additional semester, then take a hard look at your timing. Can you accomplish anything in less time? Take a hard look at your diagram. Are there structural solutions to the problem? That is, is every Core in your diagram really so important? Experiment with diagramming a course without one of them. Could you still defend the course? Can you conceive of a

number of related Core items as a group of Choices from which students choose several? Can students complete some of the material on their own, thereby reducing the amount of class time required? Do all students have to do all the work, or can it be divided up with groups of students reporting back to the whole class?

The questions posed above are difficult ones; resist the temptation to find easy answers. Explore these dilemmas and decisions with your colleagues, asking for feedback.

When you have a rough plan for how to fit the course into the time available for it, you are ready for the next phase, IMPLEMENTATION. It is not necessary at this time, however, to plan out each specific day or week. That will be accomplished as you complete the next phase.

IMPLEMENTING

- Select a Unit and Consider the Content
- Identify Learning Styles
- Write Instructional Objectives
- Plan Instructional Activities
- Write the Syllabus

IMPLEMENTING

It is now finally time to begin the IMPLEMENTATION phase of your course design. During this phase you will consider all aspects of your earlier work in detail, prepare each "unit" for the classroom, and plan for other details.