

Note: The text appearing below was prepared in response to a module participant's concerns about 1.) the relevance of the teacher's guide assignment, and 2.) the issue that some teacher's guide assignments require teachers address more or less material than others.

Justification for Teacher's Guide Assignment

You are really making me think and justify why I am requiring what I'm requiring. Thank you - this is a great experience for me and it ensures that I assign work that is truly for your benefit - not just "busy-work." I think I've failed to be clear about my expectations (recall I addressed the concept of the spiral process between setting objectives, providing instruction, and assessing student mastery of the objectives). So, you're making me revisit that loop to ensure I am following that pattern. As such, I must return to the pedagogical objectives for the module and see if there is a match with the assessment plan. So, (as an exercise for myself) I'm listing the objectives/performance standards for the module and in red brackets determining whether the assessment fits the objectives.

The content pedagogy objectives for this module include:

- Teachers will situate content delivered within historical children's literature to actual historical events and be prepared to deliver that content to students in grades 3, 4, and 5. [The historical overview requires situating what is in the book with what happened in real-life and ensuring you can do the research needed to find back-up historical content that will assist in providing quality instruction to students at your grade level.]
- Teachers will use historical children's literature as a catalyst for developing cross-curricular, standards-based instruction. [You will start with your selected chapter - not the standards/objectives - to make sure the history is taught in conjunction with the other subject areas. You will need to process possible connections between the literature and each subject area and make educated decisions on what standards/objectives align best with the content while planning instruction that teaches those standards/objectives in a meaningful, engaging, student-centered way. This is backwards-instructional design, but ensures all content area standards are addressed.]
- Teachers will use Web 2.0 technologies to develop and share historical content and historically-based pedagogical strategies. [You will become familiar with the ease of editing blog content and adding comments. This objective is not met very successfully because I didn't feel there was time for everyone to learn blogging and the pedagogical content. Also, my goal here was to provide a resource that you and other teachers around the world could use in the future. Plus, we know from research that students do higher quality work when they know they will have a large, peer-based audience (not just their instructor).]
- Teachers will develop historically-based instructional activities that

appreciate students' multiple intelligences and varied learning styles. [Because we're starting with the content, the objectives will have some basis in history. Given that social studies is not tested in Nevada, many principals and teachers are choosing to not teach it. By ensuring the relationship between the social studies content and the objectives, it is easy to justify why you are using the historical content. Also, this goal appreciates the diversified and X-Gen nature of students in schools through recommended meaningful, differentiated instructional methods.]

I also must address the Performance Expectations for the module:

Combining the historical and pedagogical pieces of this module, teacher participants will develop teacher's guides for using children's literature to teach history and other subject areas. In developing the guides, teachers will use blog-based technologies to:

- List historical themes appearing within children's picture and chapter books [This requires teachers to really challenge themselves to make and justify connections. In your case (particularly), you must think carefully about the themes of your passages and find what you might choose to teach while you're teaching that chapter.];
- Publish historical overviews of period-specific content existing in children's historical literature [The publishing part is placing it on a publicly-accessible blog. The historical overviews address the "period-specific content."];
- Provide suggestions for integrating reading and writing within historical lessons [These are the activities - two for each subject area (though this differs for students working in groups who must create more).];
- Provide standards-based objectives for teaching cross-curricular concepts relating to the historical content of children's texts [This requires that everything teachers do is standards-driven (recall we discussed that everything you teach must be rooted in a Power Standard or CEF objective).]; and
- List adjunct materials to assist in teaching specific historical eras [This requires teachers gain skills in finding additional and applicable resources (e.g., books, movies, websites) that relate to the chapter content.].

Though the development of teacher's guides may be useful to you (providing you lots of content and standards-based activity suggestions), my goal is not what you learn from your chapters. My goal is for you to be able to routinely extract themes from any historical children's text and use those themes as a basis for cross-curricular instruction rooted in history. Though the process of completing this assignment, you must think deeply about what content exists in a chapter. There's so much that you could teach - even from only four pages of text. So, you must then extract the themes that will align

best with your standards/objectives. Finally, you must acquire the background knowledge to teach that content. You do this everyday in planning your instruction - deciding objectives/standards, relating them to content, and gaining the background knowledge to teach it. The difference here is that you're starting with the content instead of the objectives/standards. So, hopefully, the assignment is teaching you a technique that will enable you to use historical children's literature as a prompt to teach your other required subjects while ensuring a standards-based approach. Too often, teachers just read to students without thinking of the content they can deliver through that reading and the objectives they can meet by delving deeper into the text. This assignment forces you to make those connections.

It was never my intention that teachers would teach all of the activities in the teacher's guide. First and foremost, the assignment teaches a process. Second, it provides suggestions for activities you may choose to do. Any teacher's guide has a plethora of activities and from those you pick-and-choose what best meets your classroom needs. You never choose to do everything because there's simply not time and everything isn't applicable. Having a lot of options, though, allows you to choose the perfect activity to meet your teaching style and the needs of the students in your room.

Regarding the difference in expectations between teacher's guide assignments (some teachers will write about longer chapters/books than others), I do agree that some assignments are slightly more difficult than others at the onset - teachers must reach intellectually farther to identify themes in shorter passages. This won't be as difficult for those with longer text passages, but those teachers with longer passages will have a lot more content to address in the historical overview and they will need to focus more on main themes instead of all themes. Know that I expect you to choose one theme for creating your historical overview - not everything in the chapter or just the period of the chapter. For example, if you choose "Nooning" as one of your themes in chapter two, you could just write your historical overview on that concept. What did "Nooning" mean. What were its purposes? What types of activities did people do while "Nooning"? How did roles of women, men, and children vary during "Nooning"? When did "Nooning" occur and why did it occur when it did? You could write an entire overview on just this topic. Some of your activities may relate to "Nooning" (e.g., a science lesson on providing energy through food and rest), while others may not. For example, you might take the theme of a wedding using a social studies lesson to explain weddings of that time and in language arts you might do a comparison of weddings now and then - writing fictional stories about being a bride or groom then and now).