PLANNING FOR QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

CREATING A DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE—MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

When planning quality learning experiences for students, teachers make professional decisions regarding the best strategies to use so students may achieve the prescribed outcomes. Planning is important to increase opportunities for learning and cannot be substituted with unstructured physical activity time, such as recess or free play.

Lessons that are taught progressively help to ensure safety and the learning of skill components so that each student is able to realize improvements. Positive experiences in a wide range of activities will help students to practise, achieve and demonstrate the outcomes of the program of studies. In order to motivate students to participate enthusiastically, experiences should be fun, encourage personal challenge and experimentation, and be organized for maximum activity time.

Planning for Student Needs

Access to activity experiences within all five dimensions of the physical education program—alternative environments, dance, games, types of gymnastics and individual activities—should be provided. Planning should provide for a balance of meaningful opportunities from each dimension and should provide sufficient time to allow for growth and improvement within each activity. Experiences for students should be designed and directed by both the teacher and the student, based on student needs.

A developmentally appropriate approach is vital to the overall quality of the program. A developmentally appropriate physical education program accommodates a variety of individual characteristics, such as age, body size, mental development, fitness level, skill level and previous movement experiences.

Planning should take into consideration adequate time, staff expertise, equipment and facilities to enable students to achieve the prescribed outcomes. The benefits of a quality physical education program are proportional to the amount of time spent participating in the activities. The more frequently and regularly students are able to practise and participate in physical education, the more successful they will be in reaching the outcomes.

Planning as a school team will help coordinate activities to more efficiently use the community facilities, gymnasium and teacher expertise.
EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Planning a program includes understanding and appreciating differences in gender, abilities, values, lifestyles and languages. Learning experiences should foster understanding of such diversities.

Physical education teachers are involved with the physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth and development of learners. In a learning community characterized by mutual trust, acceptance and respect, student diversity is both recognized and valued. All students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and ethnic heritages valued. This may include such things as teachers being sensitive to cultural considerations related to clothing or including activities from a variety of ethnic origins.

Because students learn as much from their differences as their similarities, physical education teachers have an opportunity to challenge prejudice and help students communicate with others who may have different cultural backgrounds, attitudes, knowledge or perspectives. Instructional practices should be free of gender, ability or cultural bias. Respectful language of students and staff helps to model the expectations of the program.

ADAPTING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Participation in physical education is important for all students. Some students with special needs may require program modification to facilitate their participation. If a child has a diagnosed physical disability, contact could be made with a health professional trained in adapting programs for children with special needs.

The following are examples of strategies that teachers may use to help students with special needs succeed in reaching the outcomes in physical education.

- Adapt the task by simplifying the task; e.g., suspend a ball like a beach ball or sponge ball so the path of the ball is predictable. Students can then work independently at striking, kicking and catching. This adaptation increases success and allows the teacher to assist more easily as the equipment is always within reach. Another adaptation could be to make targets larger. This would allow students with motor or sight impairment to increase their chances of success. Fixing equipment to a stable location; e.g., placing a ball to be struck on a T-ball stand increases the time to respond and may decrease the need for accuracy.
- Substitute skills; e.g., allow a child who cannot kick to throw or strike the ball with a bat to increase involvement.

1 Information on equity and diversity is adapted with permission of the Nova Scotia Department of Education from Physical Education Curriculum: Grades Primary–6, p. 13.
2 Information on adapting instruction for students with special needs is adapted with permission of the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) from “Inclusive Physical Education: Ecological Instruction Approaches and the Use of Adaptation and Modification,” Donna Goodwin, CAHPERD Journal, Spring 2000, pp. 12–13.
• Adapt the task, by using props; e.g., attach Velcro to the head of a badminton birdie (shuttlecock) and the top of a racquet head, so students in wheel chairs can increase their independence.

• Adapt or modify equipment; e.g., use lighter or larger balls to decrease fear and to ensure that less effort is required to attain the desired result. Under-inflated balls move more slowly, do not roll away and can reduce the fear of catching. Large, light inflatable balls can be dribbled along the floor by the front caster of a wheelchair. Balls with tails, such as tennis balls secured with ribbons, travel more slowly in the air and on the ground. Substituting scarves, towels and beanbags for traditional balls also increases success. Brightly coloured balls, such as neon soccer balls, volleyballs or basketballs, increase the colour contrast for those students with visual impairment. Also, balls or floor hockey pucks with bells in them can be heard by students with visual impairments and may provide additional motivation to students in the program.

• Identify methods of providing assistance; e.g., assistance can be provided by a volunteer, peer or teacher assistant.

• Adapt success criteria to meet individual student needs; e.g., have the special needs students help create a checklist or rubric to assess learning.

Moving to Inclusion: Active Living through Physical Education: Maximizing Opportunities for Students with a Disability is authorized by Alberta Learning and provides many different strategies and ideas to assist teachers in developing programs for students with a variety of special needs, including students who are physically awkward, visually or hearing impaired, wheelchair-bound, or mentally disabled.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Students develop at different rates. Their physical, emotional/social and intellectual development affect their ability to learn. The following chart includes information to assist teachers in addressing the needs and characteristics of individual students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Development for Children and Youth that Are Particularly Relevant in Physical Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Given students have had both home and school opportunities to develop in each area, the following widely held expectations may apply to the child’s development.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 5 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hand–eye coordination not fully developed (lack precise focus and spatial judgement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• large muscles may be more developed than small muscles</td>
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<tr>
<td>• continue to develop climbing, balancing, running, galloping and jumping abilities (may have trouble skipping)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• develop an awareness of safety with guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• usually show enthusiasm for most physical activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Characteristics of Development for Children and Youth that Are Particularly Relevant in Physical Education

Given students have had both home and school opportunities to develop in each area, the following widely held expectations may apply to the child’s development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Characteristics</th>
<th>Emotional and Social Development</th>
<th>Intellectual Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages 9 to 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• continue to develop hand–eye coordination (skill development in physical activities may depend on this increase in coordination)</td>
<td>• may appear relatively calm and at peace with themselves</td>
<td>• continue to use direct experience, objects, and visual aids to help understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• continue to refine fine motor development (girls may reach puberty and may experience rapid growth spur)</td>
<td>• becoming more outgoing and develop close or best friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• show increased coordination, but growth spurts may begin to interfere</td>
<td>• generally positive about themselves (define self by physical characteristics and possessions as well as likes and dislikes)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• continue to develop the ability to work and play with others (need social acceptance)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• may begin to show a preference for some physical activities over others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• may appear to enjoy more complex group games and simple sports (show a strong sense of loyalty to a group or team)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ages 12 to 15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• continue to develop and refine hand–eye skills and demonstrate increased muscle coordination</td>
<td>• may begin to show bouts of anxiety or moodiness (emotions may come close to the surface)</td>
<td>• begin to develop abilities to manipulate thoughts and ideas, but still need some hands-on experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• boys reach puberty and may experience rapid and uneven growth (arms and legs may grow rapidly)</td>
<td>• start to question adult authority sometimes engage in self put-down (may begin to define self in terms of opinions, beliefs and values, and to expand their sense of self by copying the culture or current fad)</td>
<td>• can do some abstract reasoning often like jokes and words with double meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• may show periods of relatively poor coordination and awkwardness (may show poor posture because of rapid growth)</td>
<td>• gradually gaining independence from parental influence (may view brothers and sisters as a bother or nuisance)</td>
<td>• developing abilities to talk about recent events, plans for the future and career aspirations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• understand safety rules, but sometimes take risks</td>
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<td>• need ownership of decision making with responsible guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• often are marked differences between sexes in their preferences for physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• often engage in more formal team activities (continue to show great loyalty to group or team)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ages 16 to 18</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• students have more refined hand–eye skills and demonstrate stronger muscle coordination</td>
<td>• gaining in self-confidence and independence</td>
<td>• more frequent ability to deal with abstract reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• females at age 16 approach adult weight and height</td>
<td>• are usually friendly and well-adjusted</td>
<td>• ability to rationalize decisions made by self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• males at age 17–18 approach adult weight and height</td>
<td>• less focus on self and more consideration given to others</td>
<td>• can take ownership for decision making with minimal guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• males tend to increase in trunk length first</td>
<td>• students are more able to make choices and decisions independently</td>
<td>• increasing emphasis on career planning and future aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• skeletal and muscle growth is normally accompanied by loss of body fat</td>
<td>• students are beginning to see themselves in the role of the adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>• there are often marked differences between the sexes in preference for physical activity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• males are often more aggressive, assertive and independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• females select activities that are less competitive or aggressive and more cooperative or individual in nature</td>
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When planning quality learning experiences, the use of a variety of instructional strategies will help students reach the prescribed outcomes of the program of studies. Teachers should establish positive learning environments and provide meaningful tasks and choices that involve students in the learning experience. Some instructional strategies to consider include:

- **command style**—the teacher makes the decisions while the learner obeys and responds, which is sometimes necessary for safety and control; e.g., establishing the safety rules on the Canadian Climber
- **practice style**—students are taught, and through practice increase their skill level; e.g., throwing a ball through a hoop
- **self-check or reciprocal/peer teaching style**—students assume some of the responsibility for instructional or assessment tasks; e.g., checklists to assist peers
- **inclusion style**—either the tasks or the organization itself allows all children to be integral members of the learning taking place; e.g., when jumping a slanted rope, the student decides which height to jump
- **station teaching**—a number of activities are going on at any one time; e.g., circuit training activities
- **cooperative learning**—encourages social and personal development through collaboration; e.g., group work in dance
- **investigative learning strategies**—the emphasis is on the process of formulating new responses to situations, such as finding solutions to a task; e.g., How can you move your group from A to B using only three hands and two feet?
- **technology-assisted strategies**—the teacher requires the student to use a form of technology for research purposes or in the execution of the task itself; e.g., heart rate monitors to set personal goals
- **demonstration and exploration strategies**—the students receive a view of the expected result and then apply their own creativity to expand the activity; e.g., How else could you perform a sequence to include locomotor skills, balances, rolls and a jump?

By understanding that students learn in different ways, teachers can plan for instruction in a variety of ways to capitalize on learner strategies and preferences. Doing this increases the likelihood of student success and often makes learning more pleasurable.

Theories of multiple intelligence recognize that students learn in different ways. Students should be provided with opportunities to use all of their intelligences, where meaningful interactions are taking place between students, between students and teachers, and between students and the environment. The physical education classroom is

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1 Information on multiple intelligence is adapted with permission of the Nova Scotia Department of Education from *Physical Education Curriculum: Grades Primary–6*, p. 7.
the ideal environment to provide these opportunities to students. For
example, when students play a ball game of any kind, they need:

- bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to run, kick, throw and catch
- spatial intelligence to orient themselves to the playing field and to
  anticipate trajectories of flying balls
- linguistic intelligence to discuss game strategy, read rules and
  understand officials’ decisions
- logical-mathematical intelligence to keep score and calculate
  angles of release for throwing and kicking
- musical intelligence to feel and use rhythm when throwing and
  running
- interpersonal intelligence to work with teammates for the benefit
  of the team and to work with others of varying skill levels and
  abilities
- intrapersonal intelligence to recognize strengths and limitations
  with a view to goal setting and practice for improvement
- naturalist intelligence to use such skills as running, leaping and
  throwing throughout various environments.

Learning styles or learning modalities can be described as any of the
sensory channels through which an individual receives and retains
information. A sensory channel may be auditory, visual or kinesthetic.
A teacher may consider how to present a ball game of any kind to
meet the variety of learning styles in class; e.g.:

- auditory—teacher explanation, verbalizing thoughts using auditory
  cues, paraphrasing what others have said
- visual—watching others demonstrate, components of skills printed
  on chart paper, viewing films
- kinesthetic—engaging in movement practices, experimenting
  physically, moving rhythmically.

It is important to remember that every student has a variety of learning
preferences, not just one, and that learning something new will
become easier for students if it is presented in a way that addresses
learning preferences—learning modality or multiple intelligence
preferences.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is delivered in a variety of venues, including
classrooms, local recreation facilities, gymnasiums and outdoor
playing fields. This creates some unique classroom management
challenges. Teachers should actively establish and communicate to
parents and students routines, rules and student expectations early in
the school year. If these routines, rules and expectations are adopted
early in the year, teaching in a variety of settings can be successful.
Clear expectations, with consistent, respectful follow-through are key to creating a positive atmosphere. Threats of using physical activity as punishment; e.g., “If the class doesn’t change for activity fast enough, you will all have to do push-ups,” do little to motivate student participation. Reducing student line-ups, maximizing student–equipment ratios, establishing routines for distributing and gathering equipment, and creating equitable class groupings are all examples of sound classroom management techniques.

At the beginning of the year, a list of the classroom rules can be posted and reviewed on a regular basis. These may include suggestions for coming to class changed and ready to participate; expectations related to fair play, change room behaviour and respectful attitudes; treatment of equipment/facilities; and safety considerations. Reinforcement of the established rules is important for maintaining a positive environment.

A variety of strategies or routines can be established in order to have students engaged in learning as soon as possible, upon arrival at the gymnasium/facility. One strategy is to provide stations of low organizational activity. Predetermined groupings of students could be assigned to each station so they can immediately become active and practise skills at their own level. This can also be used as a warm-up activity, with each station having a designated leader. Other routines for starting class could include having students write in a logbook or read the instructions for a particular class activity while the teacher is taking attendance.

Running shoes, shorts/sweat pants and T-shirts are examples of appropriate clothing for physical education. Drawstrings, scarves, jewelry, hard-soled shoes and stocking feet can inhibit movement and possibly cause injury. Consideration should be taken where clothing may need to be modified due to cultural expectations; however, student safety is of primary concern.

Respectful behaviour includes respect for personal space. Students need the skills to be able to navigate through a variety of spaces without collisions and with control. Using pylons to delineate floor space; adjusting court sizes so they are appropriate for the age and skill of the students; and ensuring that students are developing the basic skills needed to start, stop and change directions while moving under control are all important in helping students acquire a mastery of spatial awareness.

Physical education is often conducted outdoors. This requires making some adjustments to classroom management techniques. Wind and outside noises can make it hard for students to hear directions. This can be avoided by positioning the class so the voice is not carried away by the wind. Students should also be positioned so they do not have the sun in their eyes or a distraction within their range of vision while directions are being provided.
Physical education also provides many opportunities for students to work in groups. By forming pairs/groups in a number of ways throughout the year, students can be encouraged to work with a variety of partners within the class. Having student “captains” pick teams, by selecting students one by one, is not a recommended practice. Having students select a card from a deck of playing cards, and then grouping students according to each of the four suits, is an alternative way to form groups.

**CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The safety of all students is paramount when planning a quality physical education program. Routines that are developed early in the school year and reinforced throughout the instructional program can help to reduce the risk of injury. The teacher can guard against foreseeable risks by:

- including age-appropriate activities in program preparations
- planning and continually reinforcing safe practices
- using logical teaching progressions
- being aware of current information
- using common sense observation
- maintaining a safe environment.

All activities, regardless of the complexity or simplicity of the action, have an inherent level of risk. Such factors as skill level, previous experience of the students and teacher, weather conditions, facilities, and available equipment may all affect the level of risk of any activity.

The primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with the school authority and its employees. To help teachers decide if the activity they are providing for their students is safe, they should be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative:

- Is the activity suitable to the age and mental and physical condition of the participants?
- Have the participants been progressively taught and coached to perform the activity properly and to avoid the dangers inherent in the activity?
- Is the equipment adequate and suitably arranged?
- Is the activity being supervised properly for the inherent risk that is involved?

INTRAMURAL AND INTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

A well-balanced physical education program often includes intramural and interschool components. Intramural and interschool activities complement the physical education program by allowing students to further develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in the instructional program.

Intramural programs should provide all students with opportunities to participate. The inclusive nature of intramurals allows students to participate in physical activities at their desired level, regardless of their skills and abilities. This may include participation in clubs, leagues, tournaments, special events and self-directed activities. By assisting with the development of the intramural program, students address General Outcome C and the areas of communication, fair play, leadership and teamwork. The Canadian Intramural Recreation Association offers support in developing quality intramural programs. Their web site is at <http://www.intramurals.ca>.

Interschool activities involve competition with other schools. At the elementary and junior high school levels, the organization and governance of interschool athletics varies from one school jurisdiction to another. At the senior high school level, athletic competition between schools has been organized and governed by the Alberta Schools’ Athletic Association (ASAA) since 1956. The ASAA web site is at <http://www.asaa.ab.ca>.

The objective of a well-run interschool program should include the development of philosophies to support the concepts of fair play, appropriate etiquette associated with competitive play, integrity and good will within and between senior high schools participating in senior high school athletics.

Careful consideration of the structure for both intramural and interschool activities will ensure maximum participation for as many students as possible.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Meeting the aim of the physical education program can be best achieved in a learning environment where students are emotionally and physically safe and where a variety of skill-building experiences are provided that are socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically appropriate.

Planning for physical education requires both long-term (yearly) and short-term (unit, lesson) planning.

Long-term/Yearly Planning

A year plan is an outline of the varied dimensions and learning activities through which a student can achieve the general and specific outcomes. Yearly planning requires consideration of student age, grade level, individual abilities and developmental readiness; it will vary at individual schools due to the teacher’s own expertise, available resources, school scheduling, and facilities within the school and community.
Considerations for developing a year plan include:

- identifying the general and specific outcomes students are to meet
- choosing the dimensions—alternative environment, dance, games, types of gymnastics, individual activities—that are the most appropriate for helping students achieve each of the required outcomes
- choosing movement activities within each selected dimension
- determining the total number of physical education classes scheduled for the year
- determining when each activity will be taught, and allocating the number of lessons for the activity
- creating a positive learning environment.

A year plan template and three examples are included in Appendix A. The year plan examples identify outcomes that will be covered and assessed during particular dimensions/activities. Identifying outcomes, other than those listed on these examples, will occur as student needs are addressed; e.g., some outcomes may be achieved by some students in one class, others may take the entire year/course. Appendix A also includes a listing of activity choices to consider in yearly planning.

Short-term/Unit and Lesson Planning

Unit Planning

A unit is a sequence of learning activities and teaching strategies devoted to a specific dimension, theme, skill, concept or general outcome.

Considerations for developing a unit plan include:

- identifying the general and specific outcomes students are to meet
- choosing a dimension—alternative environment, dance, games, types of gymnastics, individual activities—that is the most appropriate for helping students achieve the outcomes
- identifying learning activities you will provide. Teachers should adapt, modify, combine and organize illustrative examples to meet the needs of students
- identifying instructional strategies; e.g., command style, self-check, technology-assisted
- determining student assessment, evaluation and communication strategies based on specific outcomes. Identifying criteria for evaluation of student achievement requires consideration of such factors as practice time, individual growth and development, and overall improvement
- listing and obtaining the resources needed for the unit—facility resources or teacher resources.
Other things to consider when developing a unit plan include:

- safety
- environment—inside/outside
- time of the year
- duration of the unit/number of lessons
- length of each lesson
- class size
- equipment
- approvals required—parents, school board
- transportation requirements
- teacher expertise.

A unit plan template and one example are also included in Appendix A.

Lesson Planning

A lesson plan includes the learning activities and teaching strategies that show the progression of learning expected to occur in a single class.

When creating a lesson plan, the following strategies can be used.

Strategy 1

- Identify an activity you plan to teach.
- Review and identify outcomes that could be addressed through the activity.
- Modify the activity to best address the outcomes based on student needs.
- Continue with lesson planning considerations.

Strategy 2

- Identify student needs.
- Review and identify outcomes that address student needs.
- Identify an activity you plan to teach.
- Modify the activity to best facilitate student achievement of the outcomes.
- Continue with lesson planning considerations.

Considerations for developing a lesson plan include:

- identifying the specific outcomes that will be addressed—what the students will know and be able to do—and the attitudes that will result due to the lesson
- identifying the criteria that students will demonstrate when they have achieved the outcomes
- the developmental level of students; e.g., current knowledge, skills and attitudes
skill development through sequential progressions
introductory activities and lesson routines; e.g., warm-up, entering class, picking up equipment, cool-down, lesson closure
safety
instructional strategies; e.g., practice style, station teaching
assessment strategies—appropriate ways that you and your students can determine or will know that learning is occurring
equipment/facilities/resources
time allocation
student organization/groupings
success and fun for all; e.g., modify activities for success, maximize the amount of equipment per activity to provide more opportunities for students to practise and participate.

A lesson plan template and two examples are included in Appendix A.

You may choose to photocopy the lesson plan template and combine it with a particular specific outcomes page—found at the beginning of each grade/course in the Grade-specific Implementation Assistance section of this document—for use as a planning tool.