

# THEMATIC UNIT GUIDELINES

Elementary PTEP – EDEL 470 / 490 – Block II

## Thematic Units should:

- Have an attractive and informative “Title Page” and "Table of Contents". Expectations for these and all other unit components are described below under “Thematic Unit Components”. Also, be sure to review the "Thematic Unit Assessment Rubric". Do not use 3-ring binders or plastic sleeves please.
- Integrate no more than three subject areas for which there are relevant content standards – one of these subject areas must involve mathematics or social studies education. Integrating both subject areas is preferable but not mandatory.
- Teach and assess a clearly defined theme or topic that will enable elementary students to meet their local school district curriculum standards or the Colorado Model Content Standards.

**Planning for Student Learning:** Review your school district's curriculum standards or Colorado Model Content Standards and think about what you want your students to learn, know and be able to do as a result of this unit. Begin gathering student and teacher resources and start thinking about how you will teach and assess students' learning relative to the content standards you select. Ask yourself:

- What do I need to learn myself in order to teach this unit well?
- What kinds of resources will I need to teach this unit?
- What types and genres of children’s literature are available?
- Are there artifacts, simulations, songs, photographs, etc. I could use?
- What human and material resources are available in my community?

## Thematic Unit Components

**Title Page and Table of Contents** - The “Title Page” should feature the title of your unit, grade level(s), the semester you taught the unit, and your program – Elementary PTEP or Post Baccalaureate Licensure Program. Also include your name, your cooperating teacher’s name, and the name of the elementary school and school district in which you are student teaching. The “Table of Contents” should, at minimum, list each of the unit components described here under “Thematic Unit Components”. Assessment criteria for "Developing," "Proficient," and "Advanced" levels of performance for all unit components may be found on the "Thematic Unit Assessment Rubric".

**Rationale Statement** - Every Thematic Unit needs a convincing rationale. Rationale statements should be organized and presented in FOUR sections.

Section 1: Introduction – Students and teachers need to know what will be learned as a result of participating in this unit. In this section, explain why your unit topic is an important one for young learners. Describe how students might use this knowledge "in the real world".

Section 2: Community, School, and Classroom Setting – Describe the community, school, and classroom where you are student teaching. Include information about the community, school, classroom setting, and characteristics of students that are important to consider when teaching this unit. For example, how many male / female students are in the class? How would you characterize students' socioeconomic status? Will you be teaching students with special needs or students whose primary language is not English? Do you have any particular concerns about classroom management? Describe the physical setup of your classroom (a diagram might be helpful). What kinds of technologies are available and will you use of any of them to teach and assess student learning? Knowing and acting on this background information will help you develop, modify, and differentiate instruction and assessment that accommodates the full range of diversity in your students. The goal here is to individualize the teaching and learning process by designing lessons that challenge all students at an appropriate level of difficulty.

Section 3: Meeting the Colorado Model Content Standards – Curriculum standards describe what students should learn, know, and be able to do as a result of participating in your unit. In this section, list all of the school district or Colorado Model Content Standards your unit addresses. Under each content standard write lesson objectives that describe how or what students will do to meet that particular standard. Remember that if you list a content standard then you are obligated to teach and assess students' learning on that standard. Also, make sure that you are able to explain how particular lesson objectives enabled students to meet particular standards. You will need to address content standards three times in you unit. First, by listing them here in your rationale statement along with corresponding lesson objectives for each standard, a second time in each lesson plan or learning cycle, and a third time when writing your "evaluative essay" (which is described below). Here is a suggestion. Develop your lesson plans first, along with appropriate content standards and lesson objectives; next, write (cut and paste) the content standards and lesson objectives from lesson plans into your rationale statement. Finally, after you teach the unit, explain how students met the standards in your evaluative essay.

Section 4: Assessing Student Learning – Describe how you will assess student learning relative to each content standard using pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment.

- A. For pre-assessment, describe the techniques you will use to find out what students already know or think they know about the unit topic. You will need to record and interpret pre-assessment scores for each individual student (using a

pretest) as well as for the whole class (for example, using a KWL chart). Pre-assessment results are used to provide evidence of student learning gains at the end of the unit by comparing them with summative assessment results (using a posttest). Pre-assessment data can also be used to revise the unit before teaching it, for example, by changing some of the content or instructional strategies you use, to make more informed decisions about individualizing instruction, and to alter or modify how you will assess student learning.

B. For formative assessment, describe the techniques you will use to facilitate students' acquisition of knowledge and skills by providing constructive feedback that, at the same time, allows the teacher to keep track of students' progress on a daily basis. This is the time when teachers are constantly "on their feet" monitoring the learning process, helping students learn new skills and knowledge, and making sure that they are "practicing perfectly" in order to apply new skills and knowledge effectively to real-world situations and make presentations to real audiences.

C. For summative assessment, describe the techniques you will use to evaluate what students learned, in combination with pre-assessment and formative assessment results. All three forms of assessment should be designed to measure the knowledge, skills, and dispositions you claimed students would learn according to the standards. Remember that **multiple assessments** provide a much more complete and "fair" representation of what a student really knows and is able to do compared to any single or "one-shot" assessment. Be sure the three forms of assessments are aligned with the content standards and lesson objectives; in other words, be sure that you teach students to the standards and assess their learning in terms of the standards.

**Unit Goal** – The unit goal should be derived from state and district curriculum standards; however, you should also be familiar with curriculum standards established by national professional organizations, for example, IRA (International Reading Association), NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics), NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies). The unit goal reflects the unit's curriculum standards but should be stated in your own words. For example, the unit goal for a unit on Colorado History might state: "Students will understand how our state has grown and changed over time. From the period of early exploration to the present day, I want my fourth graders to become familiar with specific contributions made to the development of Colorado by its rich diversity of people and natural resources."

**Lesson Plans** – Use the Learning Cycle format for writing lesson plans and develop enough instruction for one full week of integrated teaching and learning: plan on teaching the unit for approximately five hours. For each lesson specify how you will determine what students already know about your lesson's topic (pre-assessment), how you will monitor students' progress in meeting content standards during the lesson (formative assessment), and how you will evaluate students' work at the end of the lesson (summative assessment). Good assessment tells the teacher as much about the effectiveness of her or his own instruction as it does about what students learned and how

they learned it. Keep this point in mind when writing your “evaluative” and “reflective” essays (described below).

**Possible Extension Activities** – How can I help children extend, enrich, and elaborate upon the major understandings in this unit? What could students do to apply or “transfer” their learning to real-world problems and situations in ways that will make new knowledge more meaningful for them? List and briefly describe at least three possible extension activities – you do not need to design lesson plans for each extension. A simple one-paragraph description of each extension will suffice.

**Resources Used** – Include all of the resources you used to teach this unit. You may organize your resources by indicating who they are most appropriate and/or by their type; for example, “Teacher Resources” might be listed separately from “Student Resources”. “Internet Resources” (such as websites) might be listed separately from “Children’s Literature,” and videotapes, simulations, artifacts, museums, social agencies and guest speakers might also be listed under separate categories.

**Evaluative Essay** – In the first of these two final essays, use all of the assessment data you collected from students to present a clear picture of their learning. Use tables to display and summarize quantitative data and always include examples of several students' work on various projects and assignments at several different levels of performance. Use narrative to explain quantitative results and what students learned. Present and explain your assessment results in ways that the reader can use to evaluate the extent to which your students met content standards. Hence, this essay should be written as a technical report consisting of both qualitative and quantitative evidence and analyses of student learning. The evaluative essay should present evidence of learning for each student in the class on each one of the unit's curriculum standards. Summaries of whole-class learning (i.e., what students learned as a class) should also be included.

**Reflective Essay** - One major reason for planning, implementing, and evaluating this unit is to give you practice teaching and assessing student learning over time in a real elementary-school classroom. This work sample is a very authentic task for teachers. As you plan, teach, and assess students' learning, you will be meeting many of the Performance Based Standards for Colorado Teachers. In this essay, describe and explain how planning, teaching, and assessing this unit enabled you to meet the Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers that are listed on the "Thematic Unit Assessment Rubric" which follows.

EDEL 470 THEMATIC UNIT ASSESSMENT RUBRIC  
 Elementary Professional Teacher Education Program  
 For Thematic Unit Completed in Block 2 Student Teaching

Unit Component # 1: TITLE PAGE and TABLE OF CONTENTS (CDE 7-7.3)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>Title Page contains four or fewer items of information listed under "Advanced".</p> <p>Table of Contents is sloppy or incomplete.</p>	<p>Title Page contains five or more items of information listed under "Advanced".</p> <p>Table of Contents includes all seven unit components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rationale Statement</li> <li>2. Unit Goal</li> <li>3. Lesson Plans</li> <li>4. Extension Activities</li> <li>5. Resources</li> <li>6. Evaluative Essay</li> <li>7. Reflective Essay</li> </ol>	<p>Title Page contains all of the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Title of Unit</li> <li>2. Grade level taught</li> <li>3. Student teacher's name</li> <li>4. Cooperating teacher's name</li> <li>5. Dates unit was taught</li> <li>6. School and school district</li> </ol> <p>Table of Contents is organized by way of the seven unit components <u>and</u> their subsections, all <u>by</u> page number.</p>

Notes: **ST** refers to the "Student Teacher"

Unit Component # 2: RATIONALE STATEMENT (ACEI 3.2, 3.3, 4, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4; CDE

3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 5.5, 6.2, 6.5, 6.7, UNC 9)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>ST provides an incomplete description of the community, building, classroom setting, and student characteristics. Many of the "contextual factors" that effective</p>	<p>ST provides a complete description of the community, building, classroom setting, and student characteristics. Most of the classroom and individual variables that</p>	<p>ST provides a thorough description of the community, building, classroom setting, and student characteristics. All classroom and individual variables that affect student</p>

<p>teachers consider when planning instruction and assessment, differentiating instruction, and setting appropriate learning goals are not identified, mentioned or discussed.</p> <p>ST does not list all of the content standards and lesson objectives addressed in the unit or from lesson plans. Assessment is not aligned with instruction and/or curriculum content standards. The value of the unit's content and skills for students is not made clear; there is no convincing rationale for teaching this unit.</p>	<p>affect student learning are identified and discussed. If modifications to instruction are warranted, accommodations are made and discussed. All of the relevant content standards along with appropriately aligned lesson objectives for each are presented.</p> <p>Pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment are well-thought-out and aligned with the content standards and unit goal, as well as with lesson objectives (i.e., instruction). The value of the unit's content and skills is made clear to students, parents, and administrators.</p>	<p>learning are identified. ST reflects on and discusses how instruction and assessment could and will be modified to accommodate individual student differences and learning styles.</p> <p>ST lists all relevant content standards along with appropriately aligned lesson objectives. The three forms of assessment are clearly indicated and aligned with unit standards and lesson objectives. Multiple assessments will provide a clear picture of student learning and are keyed to specific lessons as well as the content standards and unit goal.</p>
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Unit Component # 3: UNIT GOAL (ACEI 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 2.1-2.8, 5.1; CDE 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4; UNC 10)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>The Unit Goal is not derived from relevant content standards or is stated verbatim from them (i.e., not in the ST's own words). It appears to be hastily written and does not accurately describe the major</p>	<p>The Unit Goal is derived from content standards but stated in ST's own words. It accurately describes in no more than one paragraph the major concepts, skills, dispositions, and relationships that students will learn.</p>	<p>The Unit Goal is derived from content standards but stated in ST's own words. It accurately describes in no more than two paragraphs not only "what" but also "how" students will learn the major concepts, skills, dispositions, and</p>

concepts, skills, dispositions, and relationships that students will learn.		relationships that students will learn.
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Unit Component # 4: LESSON PLANS (ACEI 1, 2.1-2.8, 3.1-3.5, 4, 5.2; UNC 9, 10; CDE 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.8, 4.1-4.4, 5.1-5.9, 6.1-6.7, 7.1-7.5, 8.2, 8.4, 8.5; UNC 9, 10)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Content standards and lesson objectives are in need of development and / or not clearly aligned with each other. Learning activities do not support standards-based learning or allow students to apply new skills and content in a meaningful context. Only lower-order thinking skills are emphasized. No efforts are made to differentiate instruction and assessment based on student differences identified in the unit's Rationale Statement.	Each lesson plan has clearly written standards, lesson objectives, and assessments that are aligned with instruction and learning activities. Lessons provide opportunities for children to apply new skills and content in a meaningful context. Directions for the teacher's "procedures" do not obscure what students are expected to do in order to learn.	Standards, lesson objectives, and assessments are clearly aligned and linked to specific performances and products within learning cycles. There are several different kinds of opportunities for students to apply new learning in real-world and meaningful contexts. Multiple constructive assessments are evident. Lesson activities support conceptual development and higher-order thinking for all students.

Unit Component # 5: EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (ACEI 1, 2.1-2.8, 3.1-3.5, 4, 5.2; CDE 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.8, 4.1-4.4, 5.1-5.9, 6.1-6.7, 7.1-7.5, 8.2, 8.4, 8.5; UNC 9, 10)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>

Extensions are somewhat related to content standards and unit goal. Activities require lower level thinking skills that do not involve application of newly acquired skills, knowledge, and dispositions to real world problems and issues.	Extension lessons and activities would enable students to extend their learning relative to content standards and unit goal. Enrichment activities requiring the application of newly acquired skills, knowledge, and dispositions challenge students to think at higher levels through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.	Extensions would enable students to extend their learning relative to content standards and unit goal. Enrichment activities require higher-order thinking and “transfer” of newly acquired skills, knowledge, and dispositions to a variety of unique situations and problems having significance in the real world.
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Unit Component # 6: RESOURCES (ACEI 1, 2.1-2.8, 3.1-3.5, 5.1-5.4; CDE 4.1-4.4,

5.1-5.6, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.7, 7.1-7.5, UNC 9, 10)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Few resources are cited for teachers and students. Some materials appear to be inappropriate for the developmental or other needs of students. There appears to be a haphazard connection to lesson standards and a random collection of unrelated materials.	A reasonable number and variety of identifiable resources (i.e., cited) are used to support student learning relative to unit standards. Resources are well organized by type and/or by how they will be used in the unit, by whom, and for what purposes.	A rich variety of resources facilitate meeting content standards through, for example, the creative use of technology, children’s literature, material artifacts, primary sources, and guest speakers. Each resource serves an identifiable purpose in the unit and increases all students’ learning.

Unit Component # 7: EVALUATIVE ESSAY (ACEI 3.2, 3.5, 4, 5.2; CDE 3.1-3.6, 5.4-

5.5, 5.7-5.9, 6.2, 6.6, 7.4)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
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<p>Essay does not clearly communicate the effects of instruction on student learning. Analysis of learning is not grounded in assessment results tied directly to the achievement of content standards and the unit goal. Assessment is anecdotal only; quantitative and qualitative data are not used to evaluate individual and / or whole-class achievement. Assessments are poorly aligned with instruction and content standards. Few or no examples of students' work are included.</p>	<p>Essay clearly communicates the effects of instruction on student learning. Analysis is grounded in assessment results tied directly to the achievement of content standards and the unit goal. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence of learning are used to evaluate individual as well as whole-class achievement. Representative examples of students' work at different levels of proficiency are provided to illustrate the nature and type of learning that took place.</p>	<p>Essay clearly communicates the effects of instruction on student learning. Analysis is grounded in assessment results tied directly to the achievement of content standards and the unit goal. Quantitative and qualitative data are combined to evaluate individual and whole-class achievement. Multiple assessments are aligned with the content standards and lesson objectives (i.e., instruction). Assessment instruments have clear directions and scoring procedures that facilitate valid and reliable interpretations of learning; there is also evidence of providing students with constructive feedback. Representative examples of students' work at different levels of proficiency are provided to illustrate the kind and degree of learning that took place.</p>
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Unit Component # 8: REFLECTIVE ESSAY (ACEI 5.1-5.4; CDE 7.1-7.5, 8.2, 8.5;

UNC 10)

<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
ST describes but does not reflect on or articulate insights concerning how the process of unit	ST reflects thoughtfully and clearly articulates how engaging in the process of planning, teaching, and	ST reflects on and clearly explains how planning, teaching, and assessing student learning before,

<p>planning, teaching, and assessing students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions before, during, and after instruction enabled him or her to meet selected Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers.</p>	<p>assessing students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions before, during, and after instruction enabled the ST to meet selected Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers.</p>	<p>during, and after instruction enabled her or him to meet selected PBSCT. Self-assessment, along with feedback from one's cooperating teacher, university consultant and university faculty, are evident in the reflective essay.</p>
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## Assessment 5: Thematic Unit Grading Rubric

Teacher Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Graded by: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Unit Component</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Score</b>
Title Page/Table of Contents	3	4	5	
Rationale Statement	5	10	15	
Unit Goal -From content standards	3	4	5	
<u>Lesson Plans:</u> -Standards -Guided Practice -Explain & Model -Assessment -Accommodations	15	20	25	
Extension Activities	3	4	5	
Resources	3	4	5	
<u>Evaluative Essay:</u> -Diagnosis (pre-test) -Concluding assess. -Documents ST Learning (post-test)	10	15	20	
Reflective Essay -Proves standards -Reflects on changes in teaching	10	15	20	
<b>Total Unit Points</b>			<b>TOTAL</b>	

Comments:

## Writing the Reflective Essay

Writing is a kind of "performance assessment". In the reflective essay you are expected to reflect on and write about how planning and teaching the Thematic Unit (Teacher Work Sample II) helped you meet the selected Performance Based Standards for Colorado Teachers (PBSCT) listed below. For example, PBSCT 3.3 states that teachers should be able to "develop valid and reliable assessment tools for the classroom". Reflect on this standard by thinking about the various assessment tools and techniques you used or designed for your thematic unit. Did you use or develop any scoring rubrics or paper-and-pencil tests? Did your students draw or color pictures for a purpose, interpret and create symbols, or match pictures to ideas for assessment purposes? Reflecting on this standard involves asking yourself the question: "What did students write, design, draw, act out, build, paint, sing, make or manipulate in order to meet the curriculum standards addressed in my thematic unit? How might children's products and performances demonstrate to other people 'how they learned' and 'what they learned'?" Asking and answering these kinds of questions about your own teaching and your students' learning is the essence of "reflection". The thoughts and ideas you generate from professional reflection can be used to make your self into a better teacher, and to do it faster compared to teachers who do not take the time and make the effort to reflect on their classroom practices to increase student learning. Through reflection as a metacognitive process and writing this essay you are demonstrating for others how you as an elementary teacher met the following Performance-Based Standards as a result of planning and teaching your thematic unit and measuring the student learning that occurred because of your instruction.

### **Knowledge of Mathematics:**

- 2.1 Develop in students an understanding and use of: number systems and number sequences; geometry; measurement, statistics and probability; functions and use of variables.
- 2.2 Utilize the Colorado Model Content Standards (or Colorado school district standards) in Mathematics and Social Studies to improve instruction and assessment.

### **Knowledge of Standards and Assessment:**

- 3.1 Design short and long range standards-based instructional plans.
- 3.2 Develop valid and reliable assessment tools for the classroom.
- 3.3 Develop and utilize a variety of informal and formal assessments, including rubrics.
- 3.4 Assess, compare and contrast the effects of various teaching strategies on individual student performance relative to content standards.
- 3.5 Use assessment data as a basis for standards-based instruction.

Notice that standards 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 are not listed here because you are not as likely to meet these three PBSCT through the thematic unit process as you are through other products and performances – like being observed by your cooperating teacher or university consultant using the PACE form. However, the omission of these standards should not be taken to mean that none of you are able to meet these standards through the thematic unit. So, examine the PBSCT

that are not explicitly stated for any product or performance and determine whether or not you met them. When you discover standards that you have not met, then take the initiative to create opportunities for meeting them. Consult with one of your professors or cooperating teachers and ask them, "what could I do to meet this particular standard?" Standards for the "use of technology" are not listed here, for example, but you may very well have used technology to teach your unit. If so, then you may be meeting one or more of the technology standards for Colorado teachers.

**Knowledge of Content:**

- 4.1 Utilize content knowledge to ensure student learning.
- 4.2 Enhance content instruction through a thorough understanding of all Colorado Model Content Standards.
- 4.3 Apply expert content knowledge to enrich and extend student learning.
- 4.4 Integrate literacy, mathematics, and social studies into content area instruction.

**Knowledge of Instruction and Classroom Management:**

- 5.3 Apply appropriate intervention strategies and practices to ensure a successful learning environment.
- 5.4 Raise the academic performance level of a group of students, over time.
- 5.5 Understand the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical and creative thinking, problem solving, intervention, memorization, and recall) and ensure attention to these learning processes so that students can master content standards.
- 5.6 Work in cooperation with library media and other resource specialists in providing students with instruction on how to access, retrieve, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, and integrate these information literacy skills into the curriculum to accomplish standards-based learning activities.
- 5.7 Accurately document and report ongoing student achievement.

**Knowledge of Individualization of Instruction:**

- 6.1 Employ a wide range of teaching techniques to match the intellectual, emotional, and social level of each student, and choose alternative teaching strategies and materials to achieve different curricular purposes.

**Knowledge of Diversity:**

- 9.1 Recognize and understand how students differ from one another.
- 9.2 Create an environment that allows for diversity by providing appropriate learning opportunities for individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, abilities, values, and perspectives.
- 9.3 Select materials that meet the needs of a variety of learners.