



DOLPHIN LEARNER PROFILE

THE PALMAS INQUIRY UNIT PLANNER

The Palmas Inquiry Planner guides our curriculum. It is a planning framework created with our teachers and unique to our school. Based on the Understanding by Design model, it reflects our mission, vision, and values. The planner focuses on inquiry, student choice, reasoning instead of memorization, and the development and demonstration of essential skills.

Each unit uses a backwards planning approach, starting with enduring understandings—big ideas that can be explored through knowledge, clear thinking, and practical application. These understandings shape learning experiences that encourage students to think deeply, make connections, and show their growth in real and meaningful ways.

Because big ideas do not have just one “right answer,” students are encouraged to explore, question, and create. This approach builds independent thinkers, lifelong learners, and problem-solvers—qualities that prepare every student for success in college, research, entrepreneurship, and beyond.

THE PALMAS INQUIRY UNIT PLANNER



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TPA Inquiry Unit Planner - 3.5

(Feb '25 Draft)

(Adapted from Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J., Understanding by Design.)

Department	Course Name	Grade Level	Teacher
UNIT TITLE and LEARNING OVERVIEW			
Stage 1 - Desired Results			
Established Goals	"THE BIG IDEA" (A.K.A. "The Enduring Understanding")		
From our departmental assessed curriculum: Content(s):	Students will be able to independently use their learning to understand: (NOTE: Use your main concepts as part of the statement.)		
Skill strand:	Meaning		
Content/ Curriculum and Standard Alignment:	CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS Students will understand that...		Students will keep considering...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • Main Concept list: (Single terms; 2-3 max)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • Factual: (Content questions that can be answered with a Google search) (BROAD and VAGUE)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • Supporting Concept List: (Single terms; 2-3 max)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • Conceptual: (NOTE: Use the main concept list as a springboard into these questions.)	
	Knowledge & Skill		
	Students will know...	Students will be able to...	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
Dolphin Learner Profile Connections			

Stage 1: The Desired Results

Stage 1 is where teachers set the main goals for student learning. It shows the knowledge, skills, and understandings students should develop, using big ideas, key questions, and important concepts. This stage makes sure every unit starts with a clear picture of what success looks like.

At the start of each unit, Stage 1 will be shared with students and parents through Google Classroom. It explains what your child will be learning, the types of challenging questions they will explore, and the expectations teachers have for their growth. We encourage parents to use Stage 1 to talk with their children—asking about the big ideas, the questions they are discussing, and the skills they are practicing in class.

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Stage 1: The Desired Results Unit title and Learning overview



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TPA Inquiry Unit Planner - 3.5

(Adapted from Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J., *Understanding by Design*.)

Department	Course Name	Grade Level	Teacher
Social Sciences / History	Seventh Grade History	7	Ms. Teacher
Unit Title			

Myths, Minds, and Marble: Life and Legacy in Ancient Greece

This is a unit on classical civilizations that covers the development and structure of Greek city-states, classical Greek achievements in culture and philosophy, the religious and political influence of the Oracle at Delphi, and the expansion and legacy of Hellenistic culture through Alexander the Great. The unit builds a timeline of knowledge and connections across these major themes to give students a holistic understanding of how ideas, politics, and cultural identity influenced and transformed the ancient world. This unit is designed to be explored and assessed over a 6–8 week period.

Taken from a sample Grade 7 Social Sciences/History Unit

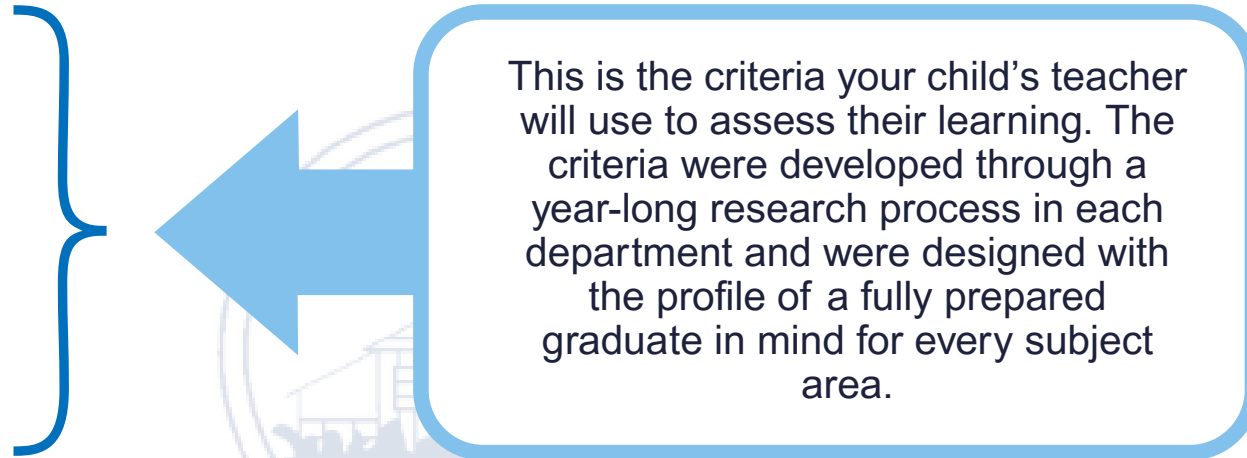
The title and overview speak directly to the content of the unit students will be learning and exploring. They are the building blocks of the school's full curriculum and clearly outline the themes, facts, stories, and issues that students will use to build their conceptual understandings.

For example, in a science unit, the title and overview might highlight life cycles, ecosystems, and how living things depend on each other. This gives parents and students a simple picture of what the unit is about and the important ideas they will be exploring.

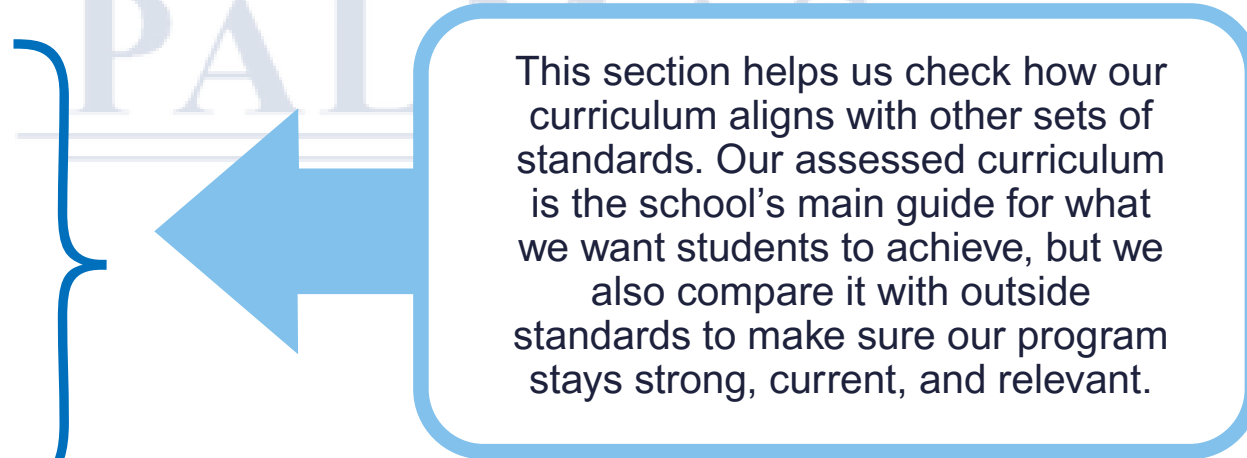
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Stage 1: The Desired Results Established Goals and Standards Alignment

Established Goals
<p><i>From our departmental assessed curriculum:</i></p> <p>Criterion 3: Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criterion 3 Strand: Communicate clearly and effectively in different contexts. <p>Criterion 4: Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criterion 4 Strand: Comprehend what is being said while participating in a conversation.
<p><i>Content Curriculum and Standard Alignment:</i></p> <p>Standard set: ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• INT.CLL.2: Interact with others to exchange information in familiar situations• CULT.CMPR.1: Demonstrate understanding of cultural practices <p>Standard set: Common Core Speaking & Listening (adapted)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1 : Engage effectively in collaborative discussions• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4 : Report on a topic with appropriate facts and speaking clearly <p>Standard set: Instituto Cervantes (A2.1–A2.3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicative functions: Introducing oneself, locating people and things• Grammar: Use of ser/estar, definite and indefinite articles, prepositions



This is the criteria your child's teacher will use to assess their learning. The criteria were developed through a year-long research process in each department and were designed with the profile of a fully prepared graduate in mind for every subject area.



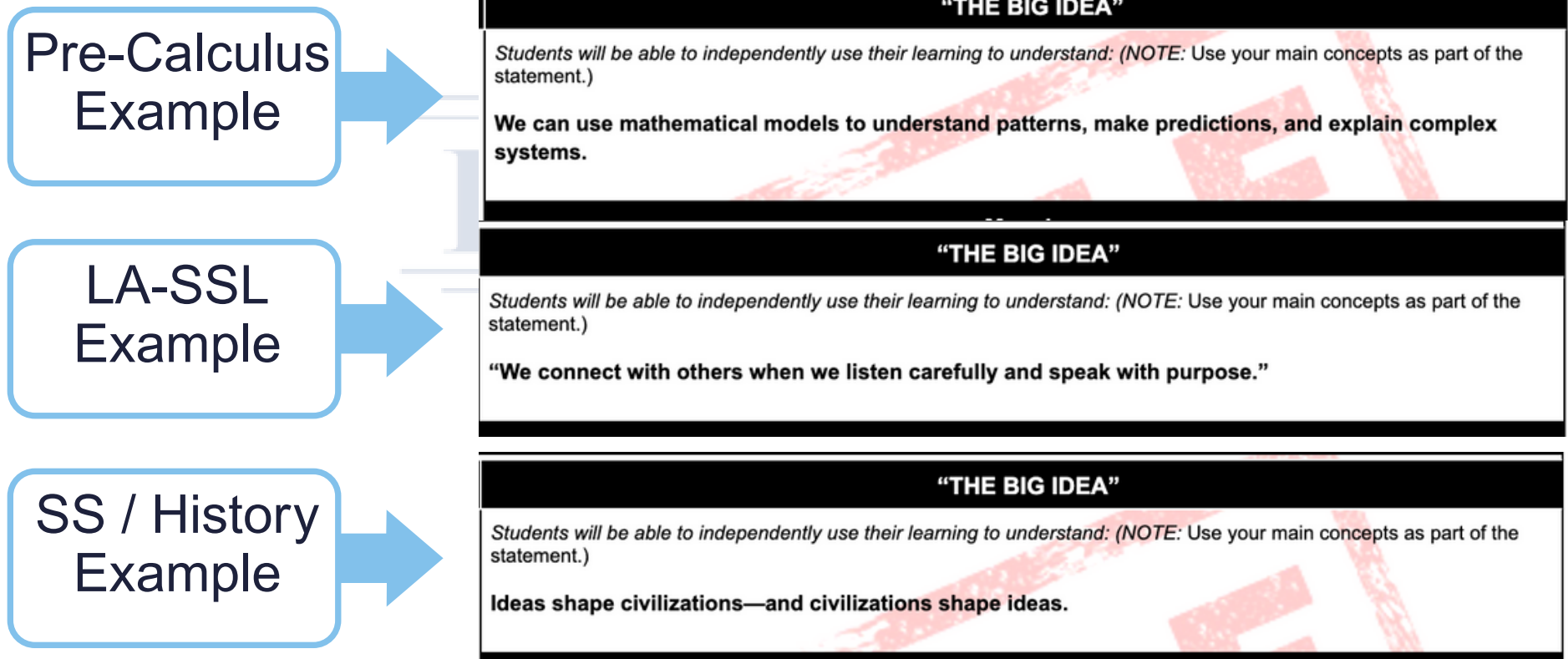
This section helps us check how our curriculum aligns with other sets of standards. Our assessed curriculum is the school's main guide for what we want students to achieve, but we also compare it with outside standards to make sure our program stays strong, current, and relevant.

Taken from a sample grades 3-5 SSL Unit

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Stage 1: The Desired Results The Big Idea

The Big Idea is at the heart of the unit. Each teacher posts the Big Idea in their classroom for the whole unit. It is written as a single sentence—simple enough to understand at first glance, but open to unlimited inquiry, content, and meaning. A strong Big Idea can guide thinking and learning long after students leave TPA, and even after they graduate from college.



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Stage 1: The Desired Results: The Conceptual Understandings

Conceptual Understandings are statements about learning that go beyond simple memorization of facts. They are broad ideas that require critical thinking, and teachers use the content of the class to guide students in exploring and understanding them more deeply.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Students will understand that...

- Students will understand that belief systems and myths help shape a society's identity and decisions.
- Students will understand that political structures impact how power is distributed and maintained in a society.
- Students will understand that cultural achievements can influence future generations beyond their original time and place.
- Students will understand that expansion and conquest both unify and complicate civilizations.
- Students will understand that historical understanding is constructed from multiple types of evidence and perspectives.

Main Concept list: (Single terms; 2-3 max)

- **Power**
- **Identity**
- **Legacy**

Supporting Concept List: (Single terms; 2-3 max)

- **Citizenship**
- **Belief**
- **Conquest**

Kindergarten multi-disciplinary example

Seventh Grade History Example

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Students will understand that...

- Students will understand that a community is made up of people who help each other.
- Students will understand that different people do different jobs.
- Students will understand that stories and pictures can help us learn about the world.
- Students will understand that numbers help us solve problems in everyday life.
- Students will understand that we can use observation to learn and explain.

Main Concept list: (Single terms; 2-3 max)

- **Community**
- **Responsibility**
- **Belonging**

Supporting Concept List: (Single terms; 2-3 max)

- **Roles**
- **Story**
- **Observation**

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Stage 1: The Desired Results Essential Questions

Each unit includes a set of Essential Questions that guide students into the learning. These questions work at three levels: factual questions focus on key information, conceptual questions push students to connect ideas and think more deeply, and debatable questions open space for discussion and multiple viewpoints. They spark curiosity and encourage students to explore ideas from many angles.

Factual Questions are the foundation. They focus on key knowledge students must learn in order to understand larger concepts.

Students will keep considering...

Factual: (Content questions that can be answered with a Google search) (BROAD and VAGUE)

- What words and phrases help us introduce ourselves in Spanish?
- How do we describe where people or objects are located using prepositions?
- What are some common greetings and conversation starters in Spanish-speaking cultures?

Conceptual Questions go deeper. They connect facts to bigger ideas and help students see patterns and relationships.

Conceptual: (NOTE: Use the main concept list as a springboard into these questions.)

- How does learning another language help us understand people better?
- What makes a conversation meaningful?
- Why is it important to consider who you're speaking to when choosing what words to use?

Debatable Questions push the deepest thinking. They invite discussion, multiple perspectives, and reasoned argument.

Debatable: (these can be at the heart of your summative assessments)

- Is listening more important than speaking in a conversation?
- Can you truly know someone just by talking with them?
- Should everyone learn another language to connect with others?

Taken from a sample grades 3-5 SSL Unit

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Stage 1: The Desired Results Knowledge & Skill

The Knowledge and Skills section lists the key facts, vocabulary, and abilities students will need in the unit. Knowledge is the important information they must learn, while skills are the actions they can practice—like analyzing, writing, problem-solving, or collaborating. These skills are shown in the unit's summative assessment, which serves as evidence of student learning and understanding.

Knowledge & Skill	
<p>Students will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Definitions and behaviors of function types: linear, polynomial, exponential, logarithmic, and trigonometric• How to translate between graphical, algebraic, and numerical representations• The components of mathematical modeling and the process of validating a model• Trigonometric identities, unit circle relationships, and periodicity	<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze and graph a variety of functions and transformations• Construct models using appropriate function types for real-world scenarios• Dissect complex problems into manageable mathematical components• Evaluate the reasoning and validity of mathematical models and arguments

*Taken from a sample
Pre-Calculus Unit*

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Stage 1: The Desired Results Dolphin Learner Profile Connections

We use our Dolphin Learner Profile as a lens for each unit. Teachers make meaningful connections to the profile through lines of inquiry, and students have opportunities to explore the school's declared values through their classroom learning.

For younger students, this might mean practicing the Communicator attribute in an English unit by sharing their personal narratives with classmates and giving feedback to peers.

For a 12th grader, it could mean showing Courageous and Principled leadership in a History unit by researching human rights movements and presenting an advocacy proposal on a current global issue.

- **Knowledgeable**

This unit encourages students to develop a deep and nuanced understanding of Greek civilization and its influence. Students will explore diverse sources and perspectives about Greek society.

Line of Inquiry: How do we build knowledge about ancient civilizations from limited sources?

- **Principled**

Students will reflect on moral and ethical decisions made by leaders such as Alexander and how religious institutions like Delphi influenced societal decisions.

Line of Inquiry: How do belief systems and power affect the choices of leaders and citizens?

- **Communicator**

Students will present and debate historical interpretations through oral and written tasks.

Line of Inquiry: How can we effectively communicate historical perspectives while respecting different viewpoints?

KNOWLEDGEABLE

COMPASSIONATE

FLEXIBLE

LIFELONG LEARNER

PRINCIPLED

COMMUNICATORS

COURAGEOUS

SERVICE-MINDED



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