PREPARING TO TEACH A LESSON FROM A STORY OF UNITS

A three-step process is suggested to prepare a lesson. It is understood that at times teachers may need to make adjustments (customizations) to lessons to fit the time constraints and unique needs of their students. The recommended planning process is outlined below. Note: The ladder of Step 2 is a metaphor for the teaching sequence. The sequence can be seen not only at the macro level in the role that this lesson plays in the overall story, but also at the lesson level, where each rung in the ladder represents the next step in understanding or the next skill needed to reach the objective. To reach the objective, or the top of the ladder, all students must be able to access the first rung and each successive rung.

Step 1: Discern the Plot

A. Briefly review the module's Table of Contents, recalling the overall story of the module and analyzing the role of this lesson in the module.

B. Read the Topic Overview related to the lesson, and then review the Problem Set and Exit Ticket of each lesson in the topic.

C. Review the assessment following the topic, keeping in mind that assessments can be found midway through the module at the end of the module.

Step 2: Find the Ladder

A: Complete the lesson's Problem Set.

B: Analyze and write notes on the new complexities of each problem as well as the sequences and progressions throughout problems (e.g., pictorial to abstract, smaller to larger numbers, single- to multi-step problems). The new complexities are the rungs of the ladder.

C: Anticipate where students might struggle, and write a note about the potential cause of the struggle.

D: Answer the Student Debrief questions, always anticipating how students will respond.

Step 3: Hone the Lesson

At times, the lesson and Problem Set are appropriate for all students and the day's schedule. At others, they may need customizing. If the decision is to customize based on either the needs of students or scheduling constraints, a suggestion is to decide upon and designate "Must Do" and "Could Do" problems.

A: Select "Must Do" problems from the Problem Set that meet the objective and provide a coherent experience for students; reference the ladder. The expectation is that the majority of the class will complete the "Must Do" problems within the allocated time. While choosing the "Must Do" problems, keep in mind the need for a balance of calculations, various word problem types, and work at both the pictorial and abstract levels.

B: "Must Do" problems might also include remedial work as necessary for the whole class, a small group, or individual students. Depending on anticipated difficulties, those problems might take different forms as shown in the chart on the next page.

C: "Could Do" problems are for students who work with greater fluency and understanding and can, therefore, complete more work within a given time frame. Adjust the Exit Ticket and Homework to reflect the "Must Do" problems or to address scheduling constraints.

D: At times, a particularly tricky problem might be designated as an "Extension" problem. This can be motivating, especially for advanced students. Consider creating the opportunity for students to share their "Extension" solutions with the class at a weekly session or on video.

E: Consider how to best use the vignettes of the Concept Development section of the lesson. Read through the vignettes, and highlight selected parts to be included in the delivery of instruction so that students can be independently successful on the assigned task.

F: Pay close attention to the questions chosen for the Student Debrief. Regularly ask students, "What was the lesson's learning goal today?" Help them articulate the goal.

G: Adjust the balance of the lesson's components as necessary to support the work students are expected to do in the Problem Set or task, e.g., the Fluency, Exit Ticket, Homework, Application Problem.