Q:
Share your stories and examples of collaborative development of units and curriculum. How do these documents guide teaching and create consistency in programs? How do learners benefit from such collaboration across a program?

Keeping consistency in learning activities, content, and schedules across sections is crucial for achieving learning goals for all students. Instructors in a multi-section course can collaborate to create course modules to organize courses by weeks, units, or any other organizational structure that works for the course.

Thoughtfully guided course modules enable all sections of the course to be consistent by providing items associated with the learning goals for each unit: course resources (materials), assignments, quizzes, and tests. With the resources of such modules, instructors can create a one-directional linear flow of activities for the students to do.

Angela Lee-Smith, Korean
Yale University, New Haven, CT

We created unit documents across languages to allow more creativity and freedom for teachers as we moved away from textbooks, but also to erase the stigma that one language was easier than another. We all do the same projects and cover the same topics, so students see that we are on the same page. Our framework allows us to focus on creative ways to teach, allows us to lean on one another for ideas, and allows our students to stop comparing and start producing.

Rachel Chabot, French
Stratford Academy, Macon, GA

Personal readings and journals plus mini-presentations for languages for specific purposes (LSP) courses are the components of a collaborative project based on Marta Chamorro’s (University of Tulsa) presentation at CIBER’s 2011 national conference. I have adapted it and shared it many times since then. Each student individually finds authentic readings or short videos related to their area of professional interest and keeps an online professional journal (that I respond to periodically). Twice during the course, each student does a series of mini-presentations to small groups of classmates, then leads a discussion about the professional topics they are investigating. In this way, all students investigate topics of professional interest to them individually while also sharing and learning about the work other students are doing. With highly structured descriptions of assignments and rubrics for each activity provided by the instructor, students collaborate in developing LSP curricula that directly meet their own professional goals.

Darcy Lear, Spanish
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

My fourth grade students are learning about monarch butterfly migration to Mexico and conservation in Spanish, Library, Computer Lab, and Art classes. They can describe where, why, and when monarchs migrate using simple sentences in Spanish—incorporating direction words, weather vocabulary, and months of the year. They are practicing their research skills in Library as they figure out ways to help protect the butterfly population. The informational posters they’re designing in Computer Lab will be displayed at the public library and local nursery this spring and next to a collaborative mural at school depicting the butterfly sanctuaries in Michoacán. Their learning goes so much deeper and they’re participating in their school, local, and global communities in a way they would not otherwise without the cross-curricular collaboration.

Jennifer Kennedy
Southern Elementary School, Lexington, KY

Offer Your Views in So You Say

MAR/APR

Q: How do you help learners understand and work on what it takes to move along the proficiency continuum? Share your examples and stories of success.

To offer your views on the topic, go to www.actfl.org/publications/all/the-language-educator/so-you-say.