

Examining Current Curricular Choices

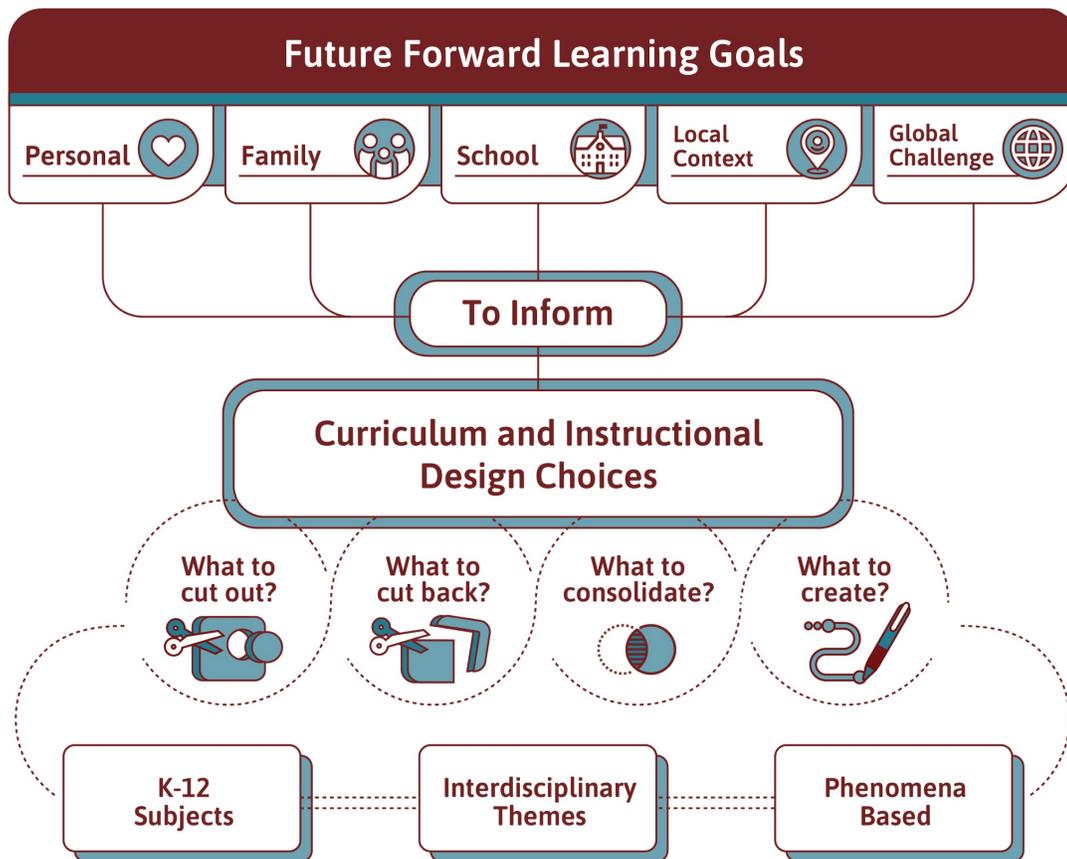
1. **Compile existing units of study from your curriculum.** *Ideally, this can be done in grade level bands (e.g., K-1, 6-8) to ensure the choices you want to make do not put undue pressure on other grade levels to capture essential content. Working in departments on the high school level is obviously important, but it is also equally important to review across a grade level to see what the challenges will be for learners attempting to juggle multiple demands.*
2. **Examine each one and tell a brief story (thumbnail synopsis) of that unit.** *Why does it exist? What are the **essential** learnings students will be able to continue to develop and transfer when that unit is over? What are the most critical standards to be in the foreground?*
3. **Review the storyline through the scope of the year.** *Are there connections between the units? What does your curriculum value the most?*
4. **Ask yourselves the following questions:**

Could you **cut out** unit(s) of study to make room for deeper investigation and development of key concepts and skills? *What matters most given the time that we have for our specific learners with our specific conditions, we must govern how we decide.*

Could you **cut back** each unit of study significantly by focusing on 1 compelling big idea? *Consider cuts in skills, content, and assessments that distract from the big idea. The goal is to move into the foreground important cognitive and technical skills, content that is central to the big idea, and commitment to demonstrations of learning that are most revealing and helpful.*

Could you **consolidate** based on units of study and personal learning progress during the remote learning time? *Examine each unit to combine elements to make a more effective coherent whole.*

Could you **create** a new unit or module to replace this altogether? *Certainly new units could be interdisciplinary derived from a reconsideration of your existing layout for the school year. A deliberate lens from multiple subject areas on common topics, problems, issues, and themes could provide a fresh perspective for learners.*



5. **Develop learning experiences to illuminate connections in the curriculum narrative.** Regardless of your approach (one subject area at a time, deliberate connections across subjects, and/or contemporary challenges that are transdisciplinary in nature, it helps to frame compelling or essential question(s) to launch the experience as well as develop assessments that require students to apply learning to make sense of a complex, ambiguous, authentic, and meaningful situation.
 - **K-12 Subjects:** Subject area teams work to streamline and rework a storyline for a given grade level or course. The choices of what to cut out and cut back on are informed by and communicated with other vertical teams. For example: Roadtrip of the United States: Regional Exploration (curriculum storyline for 4th grade Social Studies). What makes objects move the way they do? — a course long investigation in Physics.
 - **Interdisciplinary Themes:** Selection of interdisciplinary themes or concepts that streamline and rework a curricular storyline to frame thinking for exploration, analysis, and creation. Interdisciplinary units frequently support the deliberate

design of integrated units of study drawn from existing subjects. For example: *Heroes and Villains*; *Nature's Patterns: Artistry and Engineering in an Ecosystem*; *Measurement Matters in Our Community*.

- **Phenomena-Based:** Contemporary and compelling issues, topics, case studies to launch an exploration. Key is that they are **emergent**, that is they are immediately occurring in the lives of our learners. These are transdisciplinary in nature as students take an active role in seeking out and pursuing inquiry, sift through and make sense of information, and develop an idea/solution/conclusion. For example: documenting our experience with COVID19; access to safe drinking water; case studies of previous global pandemics — what worked and what didn't to inform contemporary actions; watching the world outside my window: seasonal changes.