The COURSE ORGANIZER ROUTINE

Professional Development Guide

By B. Keith Lenz with
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University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning
Lawrence, Kansas

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES

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Overhead 2:	The Challenge of Course Planning
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Overhead 5:	Course Organizing Routine
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The Value of Course Planning

- Creates a "mindset" for identifying and presenting outcomes and using new methods.
- Promotes the development of broad and inclusive teaching routines that respond to academic diversity.
- Communicates coursewide expectations about how content, learning, and social interactions will be organized during the first weeks of a course.
- Defines how the learning community will be created and maintained.

The Challenge of Course Planning

Many students have difficulty:

- Seeing their own progress.
- Understanding why learning information is important.
- Learning how the teacher approaches the course.
- Feeling comfortable with learning rituals.
- Learning how to participate in creating a good classroom learning climate.
- Learning the performance standards for course expectations.
- Understanding how course ideas are related to units and lessons.
- Creating new ways to organize and categorize information over time.
- Learning how to integrate and generalize what they have learned.

Research on Course Planning

When teachers use a Course Organizer Routine:

- Teachers spend more time orienting students to a course.
- Teachers use more methods related to inclusive teaching.
- Students considered at-risk for school failure answered more course content questions correctly.
- All students either improved or maintained steady progress.
- Teachers reported that it provided focus for unit and lesson planning.

Components of Course Planning

- The questions that capture critical content
- A map that shows the sequence of course units
- The underlying concepts that will serve as the basis for the course questions and units
- The course rituals (comprised of teaching routines & learning strategies)
- The principles used to create a learning community
- The standards used to evaluate student progress
- The systems used to promote communication and progress toward expectations
- A concrete device for communicating planning decisions
- A routine for launching & maintaining course goals and progress

Course Organizer Routine

CUE

A visual device called the COURSE ORGANIZER is presented & explained at the beginning of the course.

Throughout the course, the teacher cues students to use the Course Organizer to evaluate progress and integrate learning.

DO

During the initial presentation, the teacher follows a set of procedures called the LINKING STEPS that help the teacher explain how the Course Organizer will enhance learning.

At the end of each unit, the teacher explicitly guides students in how to use the Course Organizer to understand the "big ideas" of the course.

REVIEW

The teacher uses the Course Organizer throughout the year and at the end of the year to help students review what and how learning has occurred.

Guidebooks in the Content Enhancement Series

Routines to help students organize and frame information and tasks:

- **The Course Organizer Routine**
- The Unit Organizer Routine
- The Survey Routine
- The Lesson Organizer Routine
- The Framing Routine

Routines to help students understand ideas:

- The Concept Master Routine
- The Concept Anchoring Routine
- The Concept Comparison Routine
- The Clarifying Routine

Routines to help students remember & respond:

- The Recall Enhancement Routine
- The Quality Assignment Routine

Teacher(s):
Time:

The Course Organizer

Student:
Course Dates:

○ **THIS COURSE:**

is about

○ **COURSE QUESTIONS:**

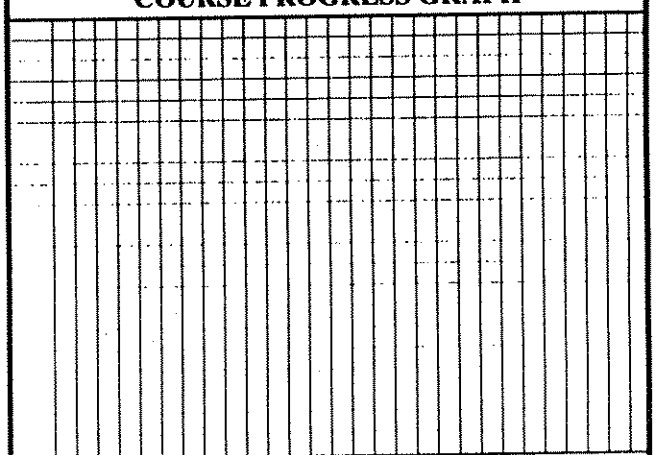
○ **COURSE STANDARDS:**

What? *How?* *Value?*

CONTENT:

PROCESS:

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



The Course Organizer Routine/Feb. 1999

Overhead 7

COURSE MAP
This course:
Student:
includes
COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES
LEARNING RITUALS
PERFORMANCE OPTIONS
CRITICAL CONCEPTS
Learned in these UNITS

The Course Organizer Routine/Feb. 1999

Overhead 9

Teacher(s): Mr. Culbertson

Time: 10:05-10:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Jean Wojoski

Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

① THIS COURSE:

United States History to 1900

is about: How the United States was created, grew to be a nation, and led the world into a revolution based on technology.

② COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What ideas have shaped (are shaping) the destiny of the U.S.?
2. How has geography affected the creation and development of the U.S.?
3. How h
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   impor
6. How h
7. How h
8. How d
9. What is the culture of the U.S.?
10. How has the "American Dream" affected U.S. culture?

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isions?

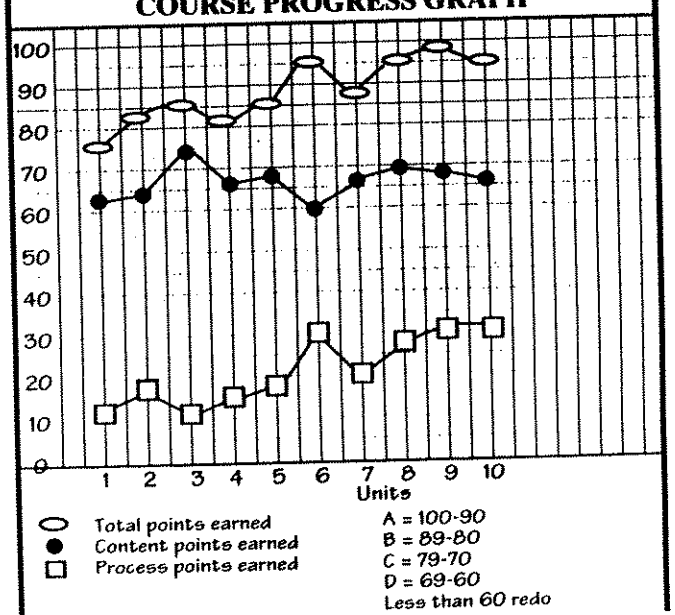
THIS COURSE

The name of the course and a summary or paraphrase of what the course is about

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
CONTENT:		
1. Understanding Big Ideas	Unit Tests	50 pts.
2. Applying Big Ideas	Unit Projects	10 pts.
3. Providing Examples & Details	Daily Work	10 pts.
		70 pts.
PROCESS:		
1. Using Strategies	Class Demo	20 pts.
2. Participating	Class Demo	5 pts.
3. Following Rules	Class Demo	5 pts.
		30 pts.

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



The Course Paraphrase

Should:

- Capture the main idea of the course.
- Distinguish the course from similar courses.
- Clearly and meaningfully communicate course content.
- Provide an umbrella for all learning.

Teacher(s): Mr. Culbertson

Time: 10:05-10:57

The Course Organizer

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② **COURSE QUESTIONS:**

1. What ideas have shaped (are shaping) the destiny of the U.S.?
2. How has geography affected the creation and development of the U.S.?
3. How has conflict affected the destiny of the U.S.?
4. How do different sources help us understand the U.S. experience and how do we use these sources?
5. How have we protected our civil rights, and why has this been an important concern in the history of the people of the U.S.?
6. How have art and literature served as windows to U.S. history?
7. How has technology affected U.S. society and history?
8. How can learning and understanding history affect our decisions?
9. What is the culture of the U.S.?
10. How has the "American Dream" affected U.S. culture?

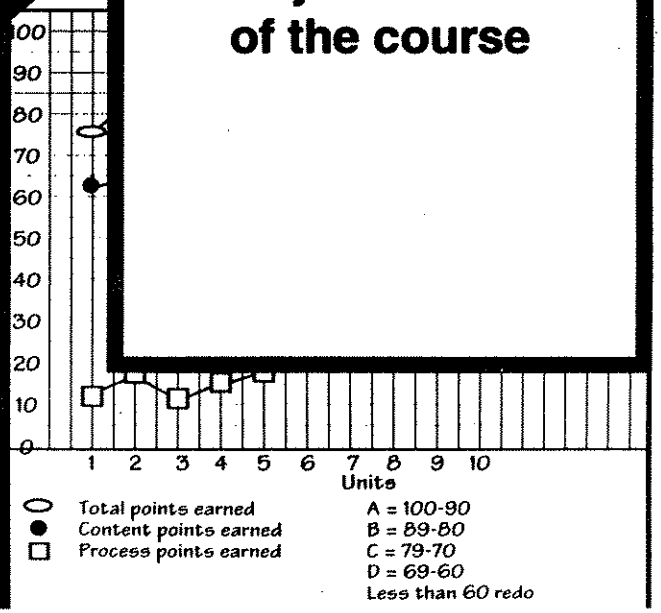
What?

CONT

1. Under
2. Apply
3. Provi
& D

PROC

1. Using
2. Parti
3. Follo



COURSE QUESTIONS

The critical questions that every student in the class will be able to answer by the end of the course

The Course Questions

- Serve as the basis for many conversations with students.
- Include expectations related to HOW to learn or demonstrate competence.
- Identify ways in which students should think about information to be learned.
- Lead students to do well on outcome measures.
- Enable students to monitor progress in learning.
- Help students identify the critical concepts or ideas to be shared.
- Help students think about the context and how it fits into other contexts.
- Help students organize information that supports the critical concepts or ideas to be learned.
- Use words like "how" and "why" to form broad questions (not objectives or commands).

Teacher(s): Mr. Culbertson
Time: 10:05-10:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Jean Wojoski
Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

COURSE STANDARDS

The standards that will be emphasized and used for feedback and determination of grades.

Also, a graph that students can use to monitor individual progress across units in the course.

9. What is the culture of the U.S.?

10. How has the "American Dream" affected U.S. culture?

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
CONTENT:		
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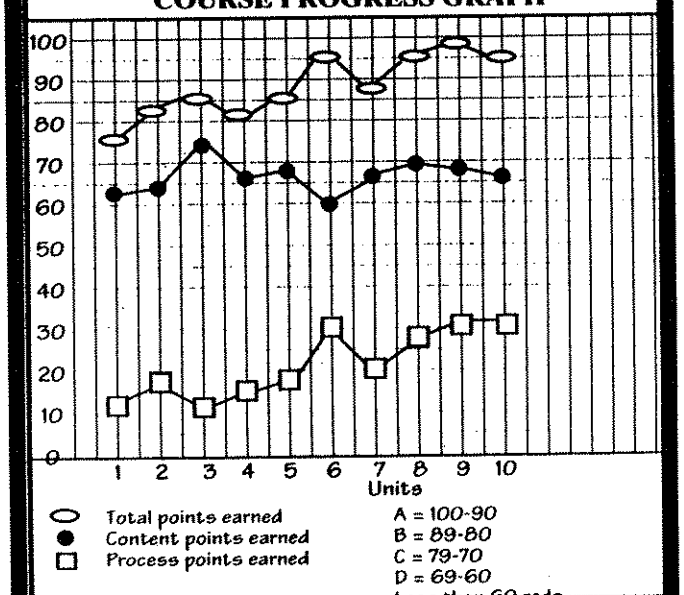
COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



Course Standards

Content Course Standards ("what")

- Ideas
- Concepts
- Examples
- Terms
- Details
- Procedures

Process Course Standards ("how")

- Skills
- Learning strategies
- Social skills strategies
- Participation
- Preparation
- Rule following

Assessment Methods

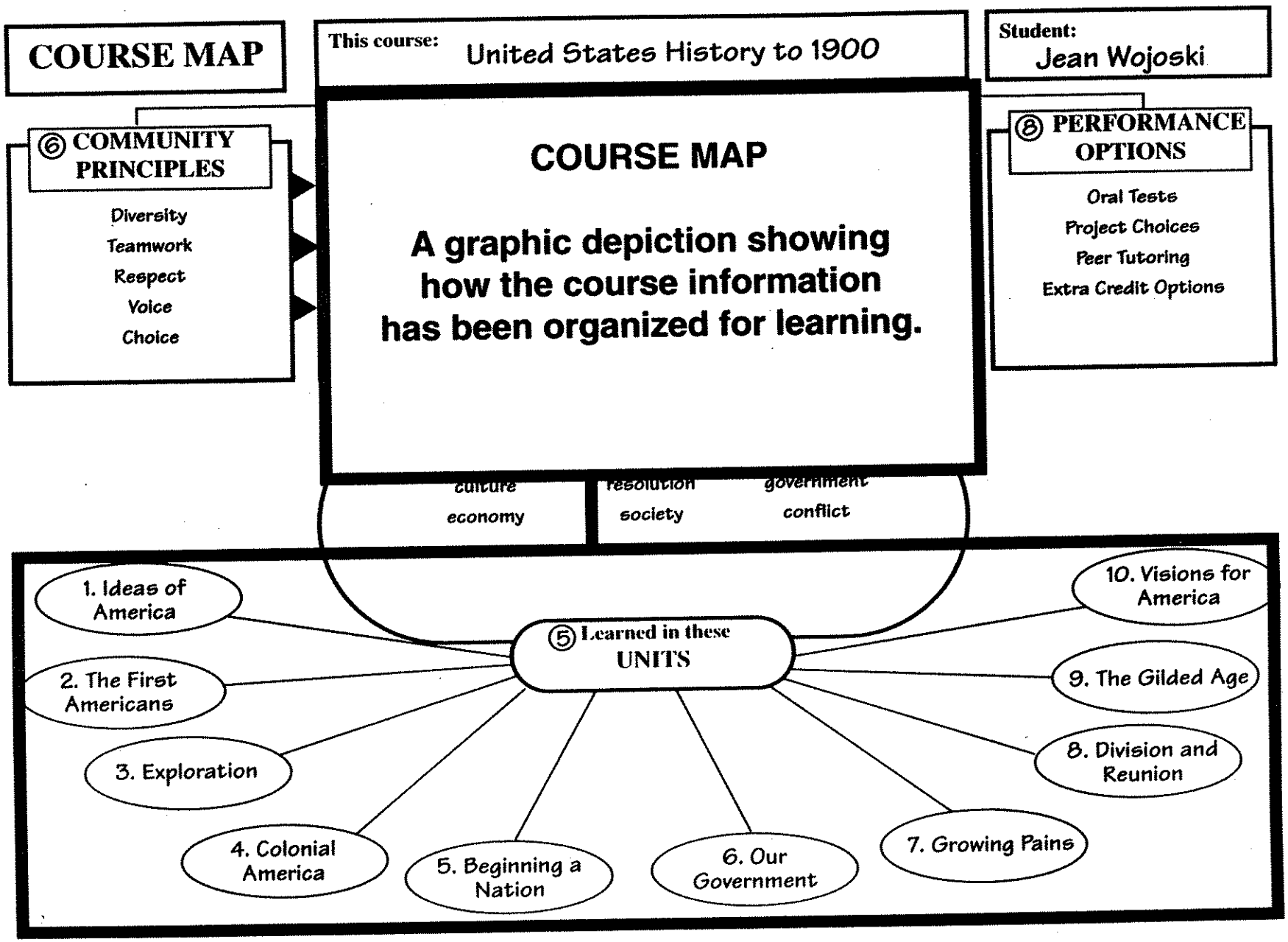
- Tests
- Quizzes
- Homework
- Projects
- Demonstrations
- Observation

CRITICAL CONCEPTS
The critical concepts that will be emphasized throughout the course, that relate to course questions, and that cut across more that one unit.
④ CRITICAL CONCEPTS
geography
culture
economy
creation
resolution
society
technology
government
conflict
⑤ Learned in these
UNITS
1. Ideas of America
2. The First Americans
3. Exploration
4. Colonial America
5. Beginning a Nation
6. Our Government
7. Growing Pains
8. Division and Reunion
9. The Gilded Age
10. Visions for America

The Critical Concepts

Select concepts that are:

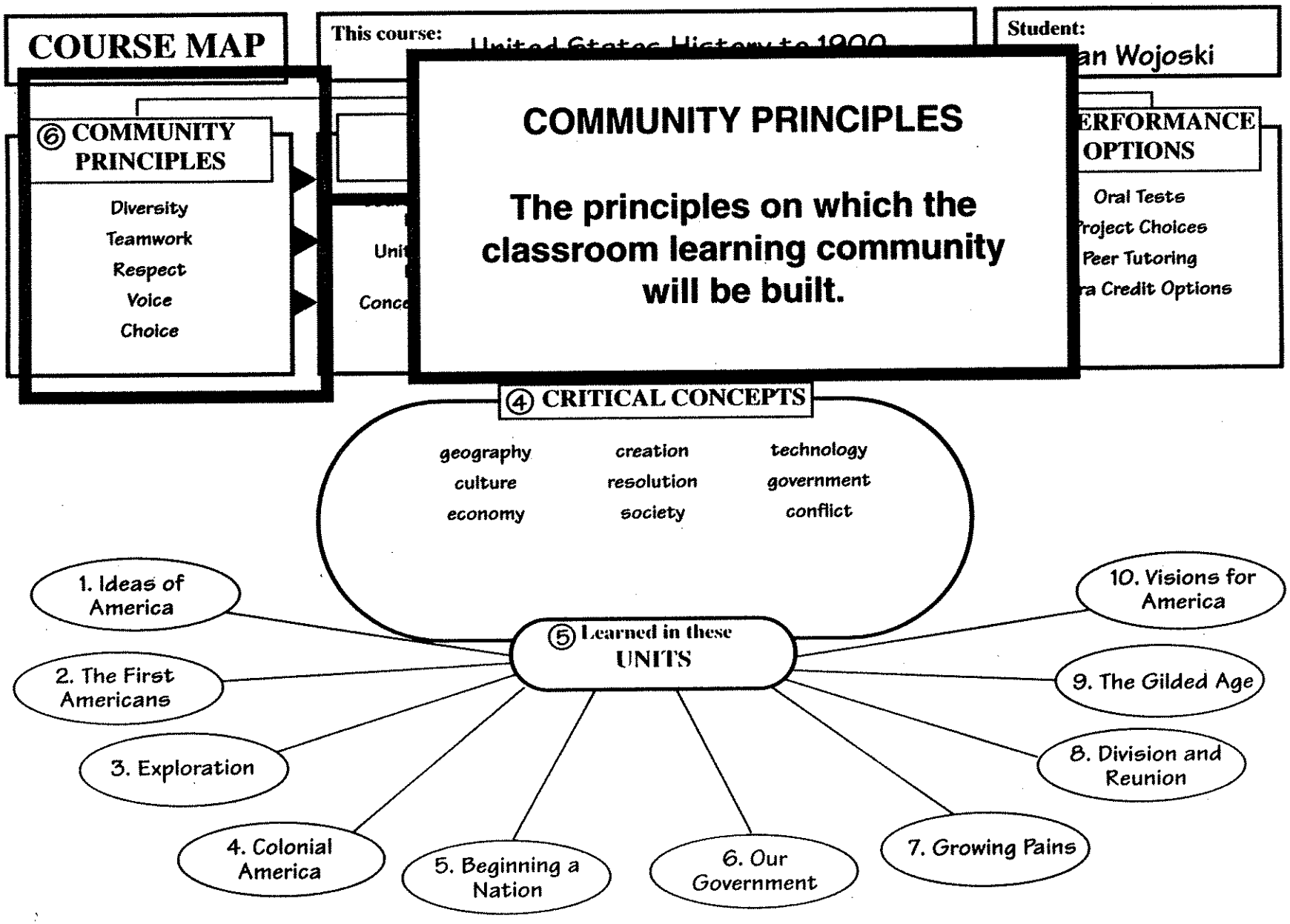
- Foundational
- Permeating
- Persisting


COURSE MAP
This course: United States History to 1900
Student: Jean Wojoski
⑥ COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES
Diversity
Teamwork
Respect
Voice
Choice
COURSE MAP
A graphic depiction showing how the course information has been organized for learning.
⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS
Oral Tests
Project Choices
Peer Tutoring
Extra Credit Options
culture
economy
resolution
society
government
conflict
⑤ Learned in these UNITS
1. Ideas of America
2. The First Americans
3. Exploration
4. Colonial America
5. Beginning a Nation
6. Our Government
7. Growing Pains
8. Division and Reunion
9. The Gilded Age
10. Visions for America

The Course Map

A map of the content that:

- Is limiting.
- Is connected.
- Is linear.
- Is simple.
- Allows for further hierarchical construction.



The Course Organizer Routine/Feb. 1999

Overhead 19

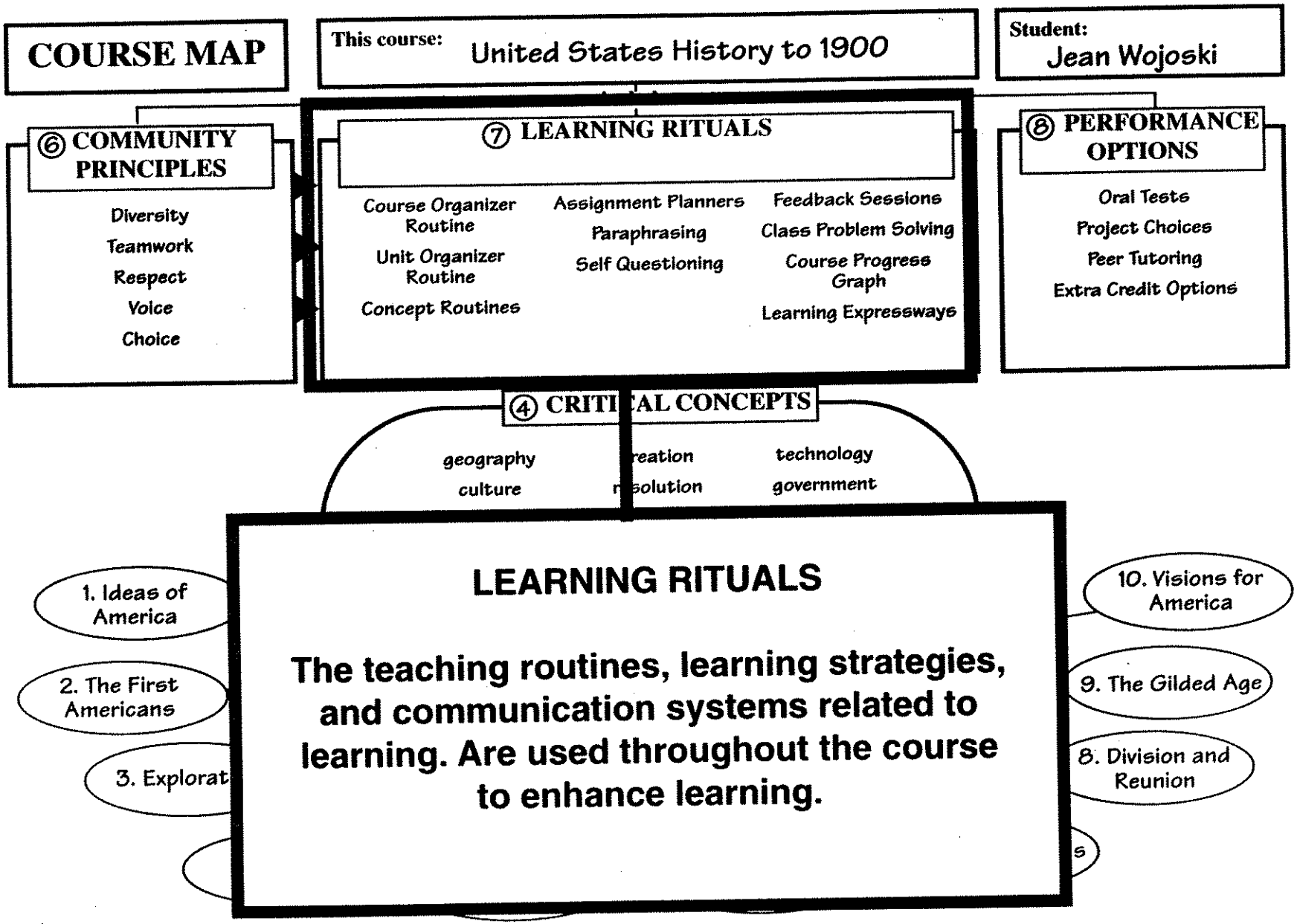
Community Principles

To create group principles:

- List characteristics of the learning community you want to create.
- Identify the group principle associated with each characteristic.
- Identify potential problems.
- Identify the group principle associated with each problem.
- Review and consolidate group principles.
- Create definitions and example.

To create individual principles:

- List characteristics of the learning community that supports the learning of each individual.
- Identify the individual principle associated with each characteristic.
- Identify potential problems.
- Identify principles associated with the problems.
- Review and consolidate individual principles.
- Create definitions and example.



The Course Organizer Routine/Feb. 1999

Overhead 21

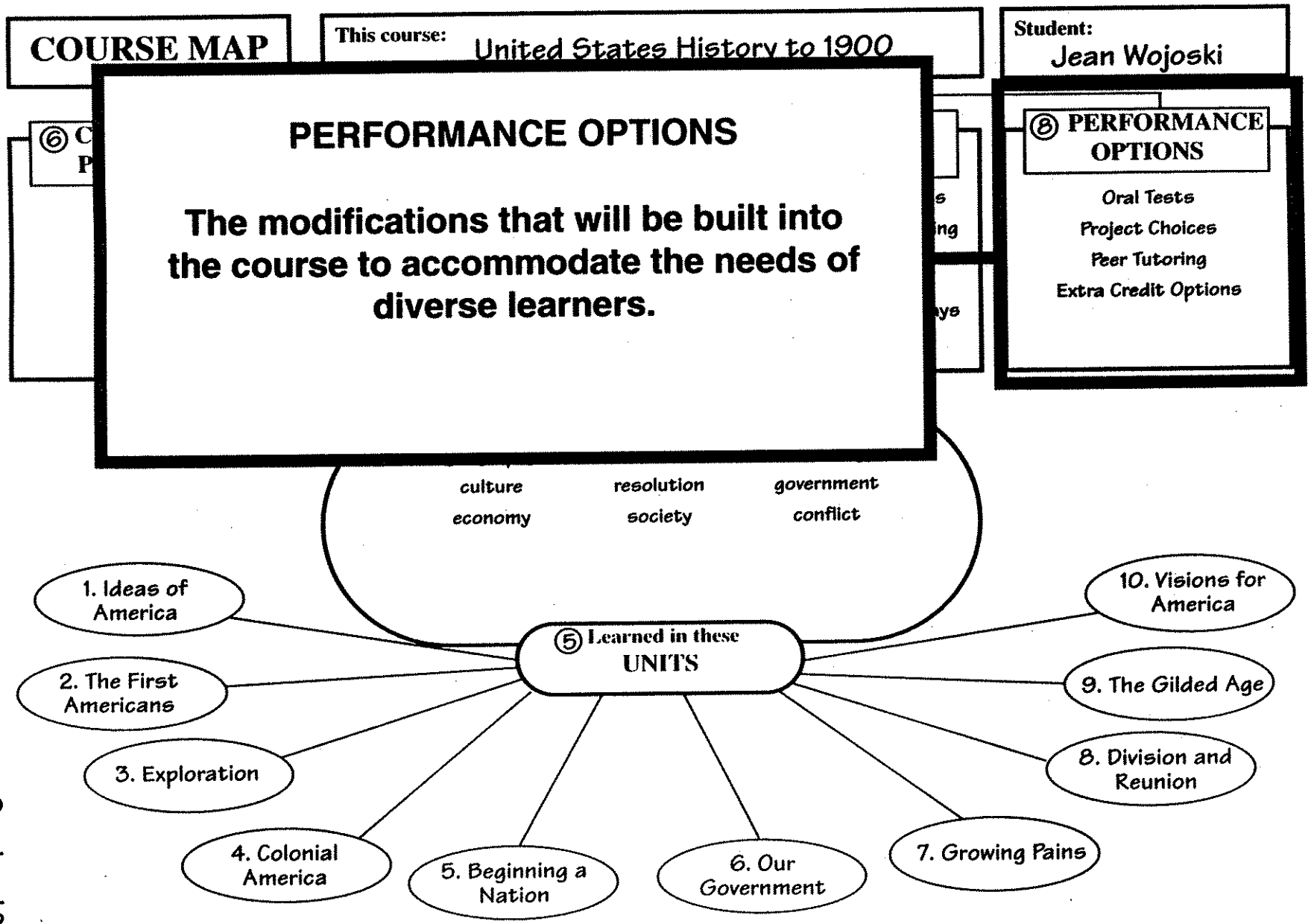
Learning Rituals

Must always:

- Consist of a set of concrete steps that define how something important related to learning is done;
- Be known, taught, or learned by each member of the group;
- Be performed in relatively the same way each time it is performed;
- Focus on how teaching, learning, and connecting to others *guide* learning.

Can be:

- Teaching routines.
- Learning strategies.
- Social skills strategies.
- Communication systems.


COURSE MAP
This course: United States History to 1900
Student: Jean Wojoski
⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS
Oral Tests
Project Choices
Peer Tutoring
Extra Credit Options
PERFORMANCE OPTIONS
The modifications that will be built into the course to accommodate the needs of diverse learners.
culture
economy
resolution
society
government
conflict
⑤ Learned in these UNITS
1. Ideas of America
2. The First Americans
3. Exploration
4. Colonial America
5. Beginning a Nation
6. Our Government
7. Growing Pains
8. Division and Reunion
9. The Gilded Age
10. Visions for America

Performance Options

Alternatives or accommodations that allow students to meet the academic demands of:

- acquiring information,
- storing and retrieving information, &
- expressing and demonstrating competence.

Examples:

- extended work time
- peer readers/tutors
- copies of presentation notes
- presenting assignments orally and in writing
- study partners/peer study teams
- audiotaped responding
- spelling checkers

Launching the Course

- Develop draft of Course Organizer.
- Distribute blank Course Organizer to students.
- Describe the parts of the Course Organizer, its purpose in the course, and how it will be used.
- Follow these Linking Steps to help students complete a draft of the Course Organizer:

Cue Course Questions.

Outline Critical Concepts and Units.

Uncover Community Principles.

Reveal Learning Rituals.

Share Performance Options.

Explain Course Standards.

Maintaining the Course

- As each unit is launched, review course questions. Discuss which ones have been answered and which ones still need to be answered.
- Review the course map. Discuss where previous, current, and future units fit within the course.
- Chart and discuss performance in the previous unit for the group. Give students their scores and help plot their progress.
- Discuss the climate of the learning community and how well students are using classroom rituals.

Closing the Course

- Present a synthesis experience or assignment.
- Review course performance using Unit Organizers and the Course Organizer.
- Discuss the value of the course questions and related work.
- Discuss the relationship of this course to other courses.
- Discuss the quality of the learning community and how it could be improved for future courses.
- Discuss ideas and options for "What is next?"

Teacher(s): Miss. Williamson
Time: 1:05-1:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Paul Friedman
Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

① THIS COURSE: Language Arts

is about: Is about exploring the world and self through writing in different genres and for different purposes.

② COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. How do you write a great paragraph?
2. How can technology and other resources help you communicate?
3. What are the characteristics of a winning essay?
4. How do you use different types of writing strategies to improve your communication?
5. How can you use writing to achieve your goals?
6. How has understanding personal strengths and weaknesses improved your writing?
7. How do you conduct and report research?
8. How do you make sure you can understand and apply what you read?
9. How does reading different types of literature help you understand yourself and the world?
10. How do you use literature to make your point?

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
1. Ideas 2. Organization 3. Word Choice 4. Voice 5. Sentence fluency 6. Conventions	Three writing samples/unit: 1 Narrative 1 Expository 1 Persuasive	3 pts./trait 18 pts./sample 54 pts./unit

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH

		Trait 1	Trait 2	Trait 3	Trait 4	Trait 5	Trait 6	Total
Unit1	A	3	2	2	3	1	3	14
	B	3	2	2	2	2	3	14
	C	3	2	2	3	3	3	16
Unit2	A	2	1	2	1	2	2	10
	B	2	2	2	3	3	3	15
	C	1	2	2	2	3	3	13
Unit3	A	1	1	1	2	2	3	10
	B	3	2	2	2	2	3	14
	C	3	2	2	3	3	3	16
Unit4	A	2	3	2	3	2	3	15
	B	2	2	2	2	2	3	13
	C	2	2	3	2	2	3	14
Unit5	A	3	2	2	3	1	3	14
	B	3	2	2	2	2	3	14
	C	3	2	2	3	3	3	16
Unit6	A	2	2	2	3	1	3	13
	B	1	2	2	2	2	3	11
	C	1	2	2	3	3	3	14

0 = Did not meet criteria - redo
1 = Almost met criteria - redo
2 = Met criteria
3 = Creatively met criteria

48-54 points = A
39-47 points = B
30-38 points = C
21-29 points = D

COURSE MAP

This course: Language Arts

Student: Paul Friedman

includes

⑥ COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

- Attention
- Tolerance
- Teamwork
- Accommodation

⑦ LEARNING RITUALS

- Course Organizer
- RoutineUnit Organizer Routine
- Anchoring Table
- Error Monitoring
- Strategy
- Portfolio discussion
- Oral reports
- Journaling

⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

- Structured Notebooks
- Peer Reader
- Videotapes of Presentations
- Computer Practice
- Questioning Options
- Spelling Checkers

④ CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Literacy device	Communication	Short story
Genre	Learning	Paraphrasing
Literature	Strategies	Portfolio
Society	Sentence	Audience
Fiction	Paragraph	Language
Nonfiction	Essay	Voice

⑤ Learned in these UNITS

- Characteristics of Good Writing
- Improving Your Reading & Writing
- THEME: BIOGRAPHY
  - Reading Strategies
  - Writing Strategies
- THEME: MYSTERY
  - The Short Story
- THEME: SCIENCE FICTION
  - The Essay
  - The Novel

Teacher(s): Mr. Culbertson
Time: 10:05-10:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Jean Wojoski
Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

① THIS COURSE:

United States History to 1900

is about: How the United States was created, grew to be a nation, and led the world into a revolution based on technology.

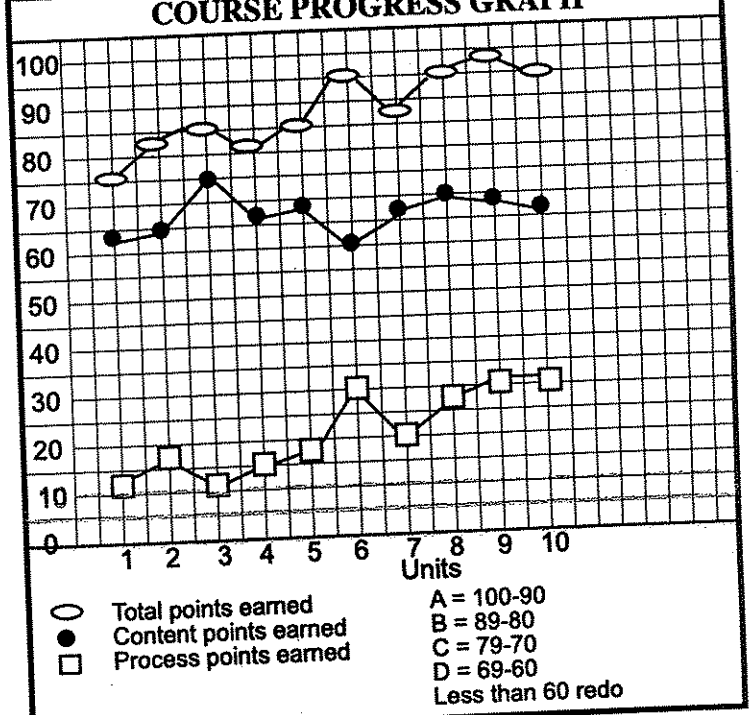
② COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What ideas have shaped (are shaping) the destiny of the U.S.?
2. How has geography affected the creation and development of the U.S.?
3. How has conflict affected the destiny of the U.S.?
4. How do different sources help us understand the U.S. experience and how do we use these sources?
5. How have we protected our civil rights, and why has this been an important concern in the history of the people of the U.S.?
6. How have art and literature served as windows to U.S. history?
7. How has technology affected U.S. society and history?
8. How can learning and understanding history affect our decisions?
9. What is the culture of the U.S.?
10. How has the "American Dream" affected U.S. culture?

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
CONTENT:		
1. Understanding Big Ideas	Unit Tests	50 pts.
2. Applying Big Ideas	Unit Projects	10 pts
3. Providing Examples & Details	Daily Work	10 pts
		70 pts.
PROCESS:		
1. Using Strategies	Class Demo	20 pts.
2. Participating	Class Demo	5 pts.
3. Following Rules	Class Demo	5 pts.
		30 pts.

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



COURSE MAP

This course: United States History to 1900

Student: Jean Wojoski

includes

⑥ COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

- Diversity
- Teamwork
- Respect
- Voice
- Choice

⑦ LEARNING RITUALS

Course Organizer	Assignment Planners	Feedback Sessions
Routine	Paraphrasing	Class Problem Solving
Unit Organizer	Self Questioning	Course Progress
Routine		Graph
Concept Routines		Learning Expressways

⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

- Oral Tests
- Project Choices
- Peer Tutoring
- Extra Credit Options

④ CRITICAL CONCEPTS

geography	creation	technology
culture	resolution	government
economy	society	conflict

⑤ Learned in these UNITS

1. Ideas of America
2. The First Americans
3. Exploration
4. Colonial America
5. Beginning a Nation
6. Our Government
7. Growing Pains
8. Division and Reunion
9. The Gilded Age
10. Visions for America

Teacher(s): Mr. Sanders
Time: 8:05-8:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Nancy Nolan
Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

① THIS COURSE: Biology

is about: How living things exist in the world around us.

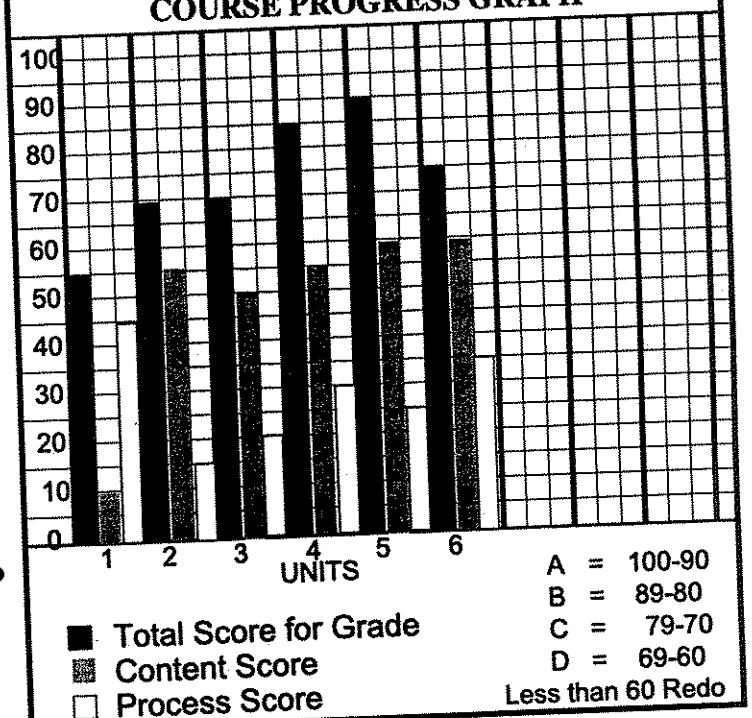
② COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. How do the forms of matter relate to each other?
2. How are organic macro molecules the basis for life?
3. How does the cell theory relate to life?
4. How are groups of organisms organized?
5. How do molecular characteristics of organisms determine heredity?
6. What is the connection between biological evolution and the classification of organisms?
7. How does the interdependence of organisms affect the world?
8. How do matter, energy, and organisms interact?
9. What defines and/or influences the behavior of animals?
10. Why are natural resources important or not important to living things?
11. How does natural selection provide an explanation for evolution?

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
CONTENT:		
1. Critical unit concepts	Unit tests	20 pts.
2. Examples of concepts	Unit tests	10 pts.
3. Relationships	Demonstrations	20 pts.
4. Facts	Daily work	10 pts.
		60 pts.
PROCESS:		
4. Paraphrasing	Class demo	20 pts.
5. Teamwork	Class demo	10 pts.
6. Being prepared	Class demo	5 pts.
7. Journaling	Journal	5 pts.
		40 pts.

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



COURSE MAP

This course: Biology

Student: Nancy Nolder

includes

⑥ COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

- Teamwork
- Respect
- Voice

⑦ LEARNING RITUALS

- Course Organizer
- Unit Organizer
- Survey Routine
- Paraphrasing
- Self Questioning
- Team Reports
- Journaling
- Course Progress Graph

⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

- Study Groups
- Audiotaped Presentations
- Study Carrels

④ CRITICAL CONCEPTS

- molecules
- organism
- cell
- species
- organ systems
- matter
- energy
- organic
- life
- plant
- invertebrate
- vertebrate

⑤ Learned in these UNITS

- How We Study
- Simple Organisms
- Plants
- Invertebrates
- Vertebrates

Teacher(s): Mrs. Ramirez
Time: 9:00-9:57

The Course Organizer

Student: Susan Wilkins
Course Dates: 9/98-5/99

① THIS COURSE: Pre-Algebra

is about: The use of numbers, shapes, and letters to solve problems.

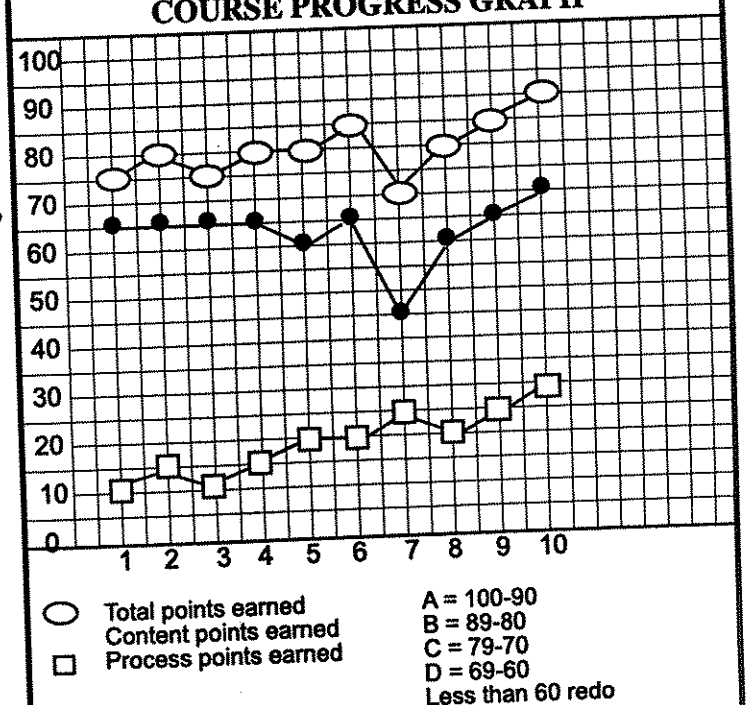
② COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. When do you use addition to solve a problem?
2. How do you use addition to solve problems involving whole numbers,integers, fractions, decimals, and/or variable expressions?
3. When do you use subtraction to solve a problem?
4. How do you use subtraction to solve problems involving whole numbers, integers, fractions, decimals, and/or variable expressions?
5. When do you use multiplication to solve problems?
6. How do you use multiplication to solve a problem?
7. When do you use division to solve problems?
8. How do you use division to solve a problem?
9. When do you use percent to solve problems?
10. How do you use percent to solve a problem?
11. When do you use geometry to solve problems?
12. How do you use geometry to solve a problem?

③ COURSE STANDARDS:

What?	*How?*	*Value?*
CONTENT:		
1. Concepts	Quizzes	20 pts.
2. Princiles	Projects	10 pts
3. Performance	Daily Assignments	40 pts.
		70 pts.
PROCESS:		
1. Explanation	Math Notebook	10 pts
2. Paraphrasing	Demonstrations	10 pts
3. PACE Requirements	Daily Notebook	10 pts
		30 pts.

COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH



COURSE MAP

This course: Pre-Algebra

Student: Susan Wilkins

includes

⑥ COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

HonestyTolerance
Respect
Risk-Taking
Forgiveness

⑦ LEARNING RITUALS

Course Organizer
Lesson Organizer
Clarifying Routine

Paraphrasing
Summarizing

Question Review Sessions
Feedback Sessions
Math Notebook Review
Learning Expressways

⑧ PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

Audiotape Responding
Calculators
Computer Responding
Graphic Organizers
Audiotapes Text

④ CRITICAL CONCEPTS

arithmetic
geometry
algebra
addition
subtraction

multiplication
division
natural numbers
whole numbers
integers

fractions
rational numbers
decimals
percents

⑤ Learned in these UNITS

Arithmetic Units

- Natural Numbers
- Whole Integers
- Integers
- Fractions
- Decimals
- Percents

Geometry

Algebra Units

- Real Numbers
- Linear Equalities and Inequalities