Teaching HOT SPOTS
for the
The Unit Organizer Routine

✓ *How much of the Unit Organizer content should I give students?* The only thing worse than giving students a Unit Organizer that has already been fully completed is not giving students an organizer at all. Start with a blank organizer and interactively complete/construct what is to be written of the form. Some parts of the form can be completed in advance to reduce the time required to fill out the Unit Organizer. Sections that might be completed ahead of time (before the Unit Organizer is distributed) would include: (a) the name of the unit, (b) the circles and lines on the content map, (c) the line labels, and (d) the items on the Unit Schedule. The key words on the Content map and all the rest of the sections should be co-constructed with students. On the Expanded Unit Map, the circles, line, and line labels can be drawn on the form, but everything else needs to be added by students. We keep students active without making it tedious.

✓ *How important is the CRAFT acronym?* The CRAFT acronym is not as important as the process represented by the CRAFT steps. The Unit Organizer leads you through this process. Therefore, you don't need to remember the CRAFT steps if you remember the process or can use the Unit Organizer interactively. On the other hand, the acronym CRAFT is a way of remembering the steps for using the Unit Organizer. If you can remember the CRAFT steps, you can plan the content of the Unit Organizer anywhere and create a simple unit organizer with students at any time. The process of creating a visual organizer and using it to help guide student attention and learning is more important than the use of The Unit Organizer form.

✓ *Why do I need to Create a Context?* This portion of the Unit Organizer is designed to help you elicit list key words related to background knowledge from students. The key words should be used to promote discussion and provide a link to prior knowledge. Just filling in the form in diminishes the purpose of using the Unit Organizer.

✓ *Why is recognizing Content Structures important?* You can't organize something unless you understand it. The structure gives students a way of thinking about the information so they can begin to understand it. Eventually we want students to reorganize it in ways that make sense to them. Think about it this way,

"If I listened to a student describe the content to someone else, how would I like for that student to talk about the content?"

The content map will help students organize their thoughts about the content. There are several criteria for developing a good content map. In general, a good content map should include:

A. The "Big Idea Paraphrase." The "big idea paraphrase" should capture the major point to be learned as the content is taught. This paraphrase should be:

1. *Pointed.* The paraphrase should capture the main idea or point of learning to be emphasized during instruction in a few words.
2. *Meaningful.* The paraphrase should translate the major point or gist of learning into an idea that students can relate to and is meaningful.
3. *Understandable.* The paraphrase should be constructed of vocabulary that can either be understood by all students or be easily explained so that all students can understand the paraphrase.
4. *Inclusive.* All outcomes that the teacher expects students to master can be linked to the paraphrase during instruction.

B. The "Content Structure." The heart of the content map is represented by the graphic representation of the various components of the content. A good content structure is:

1. *Limiting.* When the structure of the content is important for the student to recall, the map should be limited to seven or fewer parts. Chunking into groups of three or four, like your telephone number, is helpful.
2. *Connected.* Each section of the map should be connected with lines to the other sections of the map where an important relationship is to be established during the lesson. Arrows may be included to show additional relationships.
3. *Linear.* While not all thinking and organizational patterns are linear, the content map should present a linear representation of either the order in which the content will be learned or be presented. In general, the sections placed on the left side of the map indicate what will be learned/accomplished first and the sections on the right side of the map show what will be learned/accomplished last.
4. *Hierarchical.* Each section of the map should allow for the development of subtopics and associated details. The connecting lines should show the hierarchical relationships between the "Big Idea Paraphrase" and the supporting information. Sometimes different shapes or colors can be used to show the relationship between a topic and the associated subtopics. Details should not be provided on the map. Details will be added to the Expanded Unit Map.
5. *Labeled.* Lines and arrows should be labeled with words that explain the relationship that will be explored during instruction. A way to check the clarity of the labels is to make sure that a complete sentence can be created by linking the Topic, The Big Idea Paraphrase, and each part of the content structure.

6. *Simple.* Think of the K.I.S.S. principle: Keep It Simple for Students! The fewer the parts, the clearer the language and vocabulary, the fewer the words, the more likely that students will be able to use the content map to help organize their ideas around the structure as learning progresses.

✓ *How do I use the Unit Map?* The goal is help the students think about each part of the map. You can start with the Unit Paraphrase or you can present all the other parts of the content map and then ask students, "So, what is this all about"? You can work with students to create a meaningful "big idea" statement. It is best to present each part of the map and talk a little bit about each section so that students begin to get the picture of what the unit will be about.

✓ *What do you mean by Acknowledge Unit Relationships?* This was developed because teachers were testing understanding of relationships that had not been discussed or explored during the unit. For example, students were memorizing lists of information, but they weren't practicing explaining or exploring important relationships that were important to expected outcomes. When thinking about what to put here, think about how you will present this to students. When you use the Organizer with students have the students think about what you have just presented in the previous sections of the Unit Organizer and then ask them. "So, what do you think I am going to have you do on the test to show that you understand this?" Work with students to identify the kind of relationships that you expect. Look at your tests. What types of relationships do you expect for the outcomes you desire?

✓ *How do you help students acknowledge relationships as they progress through the unit?* As you work through the unit, ask students to identify important relationships. For example, if "comparison" is an important relationship, ask students, "So, what should you be able to compare?" Use these prompts to prepare students for essays and other types of higher-order performance tasks as part of regular classrooms activities.

✓ *How shall we Frame the Unit Self-Test Questions?* The questions are created interactively with students. Ask your students." So, what questions should you be able to answer to ensure that you do well on the test or performance measure?" At first, you may get very concrete questions. Help students cluster the concrete questions to help them see how to create bigger questions. Prompt students to look at the relationships and have them create questions based on the list of relationships. The questions listed here should stem from studying the content of the Unit Map. Questions that appear to have no connection to the Unit Map may not be good questions.

✓ *Where do I start?* Some teachers like to develop their questions first. Others prefer to develop the map first and then think about the questions. In many cases, teachers will create the Expanded Map first so that they can play with the content and the details and then finally decide on what will be on the map that is placed on the first page of the Unit Organizer.

Unit Organizer
Professional Development Activities

1. Develop a poorly constructed Unit Organizer and a well constructed Unit Organizer. Ask participants to work in pairs or small groups to identify and list the good and poor qualities of each. Lead a group discussion of their findings.

2. Identify a common topic that very teacher must deal with in his or her classroom (e.g. mutual respect, cooperative learning. Ask teachers to construct a Unit Organizer or part of a Unit Organizer (e.g., just the Unit Map and the Unit Self-test Questions) on the topic. Ask teachers to share how they have represented the content.

3. Tell teachers in advance of the professional development session to bring materials to plan a unit. Have teachers create a Unit Organizer and share it with the group. Distribute transparencies and markers. Ask teachers to trace the Unit Organizer on the transparency and be prepared to explain it the group. Teachers need not complete the Unit Schedule. If time is limited, tell teachers they do not have to share the Expanded Unit Map. Tell teacher they have one minute to share their Unit Organizer.

4. When sharing Unit Organizers and time is limited, have teachers stand up and find a partner in another part of the room. Once they have found a partner, have the partners share their Unit Organizers with each other. Allow about five minutes for each person to share.

5. After you have explained the Unit Organizer, have participants pair up and create a Unit Map and Unit Self-test Questions related to the content of the Unit Organizer.

6. Divide participants into groups of three. Have participants turn to page 42 in The Unit Organizer guidebook. Have each participant read either the "Launching," Floating," or "Tying Up" phases of CRAFT and have them summarize what is involved in each step of CRAFT.

7. Divide Participants into pairs or teams and have team members discuss how CRAFT could be implemented without the use of The Unit Organizer form.

8. Ask teachers to bring one or several of their tests. Have teachers survey the test to identify what they thought was important in the unit. What would be the Unit Organizer that would go with this test? What relationships did they expect students to demonstrate? This activity can be conducted in conjunction with Activity 3.