

Sample Unit Plans Portfolio

Standards-Aligned, Student-Centered Learning Units for 5th Grade

Karter Ruiz

5th Grade Educator · Curriculum Designer

San Francisco, CA · 2024–2025 School Year

Unit 1: Math – Volume & Expressions

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Duration: 2 Weeks

Standards:

- CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.MD.C.3–5 (Understand concepts of volume)
 - CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.OA.A.1–2 (Write and interpret numerical expressions)
-

Essential Questions:

- How can we use math to understand space, structure, and real-world design?
 - What do expressions and volume tell us about the way things are built and measured?
-

Learning Objectives:

- Represent and solve problems involving volume using unit cubes and formulas.
 - Write, interpret, and evaluate numerical expressions using grouping symbols.
 - Apply problem-solving strategies in collaborative and hands-on settings.
-

Key Learning Activities:

- Volume Cube Challenge: Students use unit cubes to build 3D models and calculate volume.
- Scavenger Hunt: Teams search the classroom for objects with specific volume characteristics.
- Math Scoot Game: Rotating stations reinforce volume formulas and expression interpretation.

- Shopping Spree Activity: Students “shop” with expression-based price tags and write expressions to track spending.
 - Math Hot Seat: Interactive whiteboard challenge where students solve expression and volume problems in teams.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Exit tickets and station check-ins
 - Student-created expression problems with written explanations
 - Final Volume Design Task (measuring, modeling, and reflecting on strategies)
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Tiered worksheets for volume and expressions
 - Hands-on manipulatives for spatial learners
 - Peer coaching and guided small groups for RTI support
-

Tools & Materials:

- Math notebooks, unit cubes, laminated task cards
- Interactive whiteboard, Google Slides, and student iPads
- Mathletics for independent extension practice

Unit 2: ELA – Narrative Writing: Identity & Voice

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Duration: 2–3 Weeks

Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3 – Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5 – Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2 – Demonstrate command of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Essential Questions:

- How can writing tell the story of who we are?
 - What makes a narrative engaging, detailed, and memorable?
-

Learning Objectives:

- Write a personal narrative with a clear structure (beginning, middle, end).
 - Use dialogue, sensory details, and inner thinking to enrich storytelling.
 - Revise and edit writing based on feedback and peer review.
-

Key Learning Activities:

- Identity Shield + Graphic Organizer: Students reflect on personal experiences and plan story elements using a “hamburger” structure.

- Mini-Lesson Series: Focus on strong leads, dialogue, show-not-tell, and using figurative language.
 - Writer's Workshop: Daily writing time with check-ins, revision stations, and peer conferencing.
 - Author's Gallery Walk: Students publish narratives and showcase their final work to peers and families.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Personal narrative rubric (content, structure, language, mechanics)
 - Peer feedback forms
 - Final published narrative (Google Docs or Canva poster option)
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Sentence stems and graphic supports for ELLs
 - Small-group conferring and editing guides
 - Choice of writing tools (typed or handwritten drafts)
-

Tools & Materials:

- Graphic organizers, editing checklists, revision guides
- Google Docs, Canva, and printed writer's notebooks
- Anchor charts for leads, transitions, and dialogue

Unit 3: Social Studies – Native American Cultures & Regions

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Duration: 2 Weeks

Standards:

- CA HSS 5.1 – Describe the major pre-Columbian settlements, including the cliff dwellers and pueblo people of the Desert Southwest, the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, the nomadic nations of the Great Plains, and the woodland peoples east of the Mississippi River.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3 – Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical text.
-

Essential Questions:

- How did geography shape the cultures and daily life of Native American peoples?
 - What do the traditions and innovations of these communities reveal about their connection to land and identity?
-

Learning Objectives:

- Compare and contrast Native American cultural regions using maps, texts, and visual sources.
 - Identify key features of shelter, food, tools, and beliefs across diverse tribes.
 - Summarize the contributions of early Indigenous groups and explain how they adapted to their environments.
-

Key Learning Activities:

- Cultural Region Stations: Students rotate through hands-on learning centers focused on housing, food, clothing, and art.
 - Textbook Integration: Use Impact California Social Studies to read, annotate, and answer comprehension questions.
 - Interactive Map Activity: Label and color regional maps and create mini “region guides.”
 - Group Research Project: Teams create a poster or digital slide deck about a specific cultural region to present to the class.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Vocabulary quizzes and comprehension checks
 - Cultural Region Poster Rubric (content accuracy, creativity, presentation)
 - Exit tickets comparing two regions
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Use of sentence frames and scaffolded reading questions
 - Visual aids and realia for kinesthetic learners
 - Tiered expectations for group project contributions
-

Tools & Materials:

- Impact California textbook, regional maps, printed station materials
- Chromebooks for research, Google Slides for presentations
- Anchor charts and vocabulary banks



Unit 4: Religion – Saint of the Week Project

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Duration: Ongoing Weekly Series (36 Weeks)

Standards:

- NCCL Standard 3.4 – Demonstrate familiarity with the lives of the saints and their importance in Church history.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1 – Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences.
-



Essential Questions:

- What can we learn from the lives of the saints?
 - How do the virtues and choices of saints help us grow in faith and character?
-



Learning Objectives:

- Identify and describe key facts, values, and contributions of a new saint each week.
 - Make personal and spiritual connections to each saint's story.
 - Reflect on how the saint demonstrated Christian virtues and apply those to daily life.
-



Key Learning Activities:

- Saint of the Week Mini-Lesson: Teacher introduces a new saint every Monday with visuals, quotes, and storytelling.
- Student Journals: Weekly reflection on the saint's life, their virtues, and how students can follow their example.

- Four-Corner Graphic Organizer: Used to organize facts, key events, symbols, and virtues for each saint.
 - Final Research Project: Students select a saint of personal interest and create a brochure or slide presentation.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Weekly journal checks and graphic organizer reviews
 - End-of-trimester reflection rubrics
 - Final project rubric (research, clarity, creativity, and spiritual connections)
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Sentence starters and templates for written reflections
 - Partner reading of saint stories for emerging readers
 - Choice in final project format (poster, brochure, digital slides, or oral report)
-

Tools & Materials:

- Printed saint biographies, quote cards, prayer journals
- Google Slides for research presentations
- Catholic children's Bibles and online resources like Loyola Press & SaintsResource.com

Unit 5: PBL – Mission Murals: Art, History & Voice

Grade Level: 5th Grade


Duration: 3 Weeks

Standards:

- CA HSS 5.4 – Demonstrate understanding of the cultural contributions of diverse groups to American society.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7 – Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge about a topic.
 - National Core Arts Standards VA:Re7.1.5 – Identify and interpret works of visual art based on subject matter, symbols, and cultural context.
-

 Driving Question:

How can murals tell the stories of people, culture, and justice in our communities?

 Learning Objectives:

- Analyze murals as forms of cultural expression and historical storytelling.
 - Research the life and impact of a person represented in a local mural.
 - Design and present a personal mural that reflects voice, identity, and purpose.
-

 Key Learning Activities:

- Video Launch & Class Discussion: Introduction to Mission District murals using YouTube clips and historical context.
- Guest Artist or Speaker (Optional): Engage with a local muralist or community figure to deepen understanding.

- Field Trip Walks: Visit Clarion Alley and Balmy Alley to document and analyze murals using sketchbooks and photo logs.
 - Personal Mural Creation: Students design their own mural with symbolic imagery and written artist statements.
 - Gallery Walk Showcase: Class turns into a mural exhibit; peers and guests walk through, give feedback, and celebrate stories.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Mural analysis worksheet and field notes
 - Research report or Canva one-pager about chosen mural figure
 - Final personal mural rubric (creativity, symbolism, clarity, effort)
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Visual supports and sentence frames for artist statements
 - Sketch templates and brainstorming charts for planning
 - Option to collaborate on murals for students who benefit from teamwork
-

Tools & Materials:

- Sketchbooks, colored pencils, markers, mural paper
- Digital cameras or tablets for field trip documentation
- Canva or Google Docs for research write-ups

Unit 6: STEM + Math – Expression Shopping Spree

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Duration: 1–1.5 Weeks

Standards:

- CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.OA.A.1 – Use parentheses, brackets, or braces in numerical expressions, and evaluate expressions with these symbols.
 - CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.OA.A.2 – Write simple expressions that record calculations with numbers.
 - CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP4 – Model with mathematics.
-

Essential Question:

How can we use expressions to solve real-world problems like budgeting, planning, and spending?

Learning Objectives:

- Write and interpret numerical expressions to represent multi-step calculations.
 - Apply mathematical reasoning to simulated real-life scenarios.
 - Use logic, estimation, and place value understanding to budget effectively.
-

Key Learning Activities:

- Shopping Spree Setup: Each student receives a \$1,000 pretend budget to spend across different “stores” using expression-based price tags.
- Expression Tags: Products have math expressions instead of prices (e.g., $(40 + 25) \times 2$) that students must evaluate before “buying.”

- Planning Sheet: Students organize purchases, estimate costs, and ensure their totals remain under budget.
 - Store Walkthrough: Peer-to-peer simulation where students “shop” in classmates’ stores and solve expressions to complete purchases.
-

Assessment Methods:

- Completed planning & expression sheets
 - Accuracy in solving multi-step problems
 - Reflection page on strategy, budgeting, and favorite purchases
-

Differentiation Strategies:

- Simplified or scaffolded expressions for support
 - Bonus challenge expressions for early finishers
 - Partner options and verbal explanations for ELL or visual learners
-

Tools & Materials:

- Expression price tags, budgeting worksheets, calculator (optional)
- Fake money or tokens, printed store displays
- Interactive whiteboard for warm-up and real-time tallying