

The Research-Driven
Solution to Raise the
Quality of High School
Core Courses



Five-Day Professional Development Description

Days 1–3

Module: Defining Rigor and Relevance

Essential Question: What does a rigorous high school course look, feel, and sound like?

Presenter Goals

- Explain the “big picture” of QualityCore® professional development—i.e., what participants are expected to do as a result of this training
- Introduce the ACT research report *On Course For Success* and facilitate a focused reading and discussion of the report
- Define and discuss the terms rigor and relevance according to the QualityCore model

Participant Objectives

- Use the definitions of rigor and relevance to reflect on one’s own lessons and units
- Discuss how *On Course for Success* can inform curriculum development and teaching

Module: Depth of Knowledge and Cognitive Demand

Essential Question: How can we know that our expectations of students are at a level of rigor that prepares them for the End-of-Course Assessment and for success in college or the workplace?

Presenter Goals

- Introduce the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Framework for analyzing assessment items
- Review Webb’s descriptions of student performance at each level
- Facilitate an analysis and discussion of items from the QualityCore Formative Item Pool

Participant Objectives

- Explain the differences between the cognitive levels of the DOK
- Analyze sample items from the Formative Item Pool for DOK
- Use the Test Blueprint for QualityCore to review the percentages of items found at each DOK level and discuss the classroom assessment implications of that distribution

Module: Analyzing ACT Course Standards

Essential Question: How can QualityCore be used to help evaluate the rigor of high school courses?

Presenter Goals

- Introduce the ACT Course Standards worksheet
- Guide participants through a comparison of their course objectives and the ACT Course Standards
- Facilitate a discussion on the gaps between the two sets of standards with a focus on the following questions:
 1. Are there specific pedagogical reasons to not include the missing standards?
 2. If a missing standard is not addressed, where would that standard be taught?

Participant Objectives

- Articulate how participants' course objectives compare to the ACT Course Standards and identify gaps
- Discuss the implications of these gaps for improving instruction in their own classrooms

Module: Spotlight on the Educator's Toolbox

Essential Question: How can we use research-based strategies to increase rigor and relevance in our classrooms?

Presenter Goals

- Introduce strategies shown to have a positive effect on student achievement
- Review the four categories by which strategies are grouped in the Toolbox
- Guide participants in an exploration of the Educator's Toolbox and debrief with questions and observations

Participant Objectives

- Identify instructional strategies that will increase rigor and relevance
- Use the Toolbox to find alternative instructional strategies
- Plan how and when to use these strategies

Module: Developing High-Quality Assignments

Essential Question: How can we identify and design more rigorous assignments?

Presenter Goals

- Explain the use of the Template to Examine Assignments for Rigor and Relevance
- Model the process of using the Template to Examine Assignments for Rigor and Relevance
- Facilitate as participants work in pairs to use the template to determine how to improve one of their own assignments

Participant Objectives

- Examine an assignment to determine appropriate depth of knowledge to be considered a rigorous assignment
- Examine an assignment to determine if it is rigorous and relevant
- Adapt assignments to ensure rigor and relevance

Module: Using Constructed Response Items

Essential Question: How can constructed response (CR) items be used to increase the rigor of our courses and improve student performance?

Presenter Goals

- Introduce Formative Item Pool (FIP) and Test Builder
- Have participants score papers from a CR item and compare their scores to ACT's expert scorers results
- Introduce the QualityCore scoring rubrics

Participant Objectives

- Describe how CR items can be used to increase rigor in the classroom
- Analyze CR items for what they can tell you about students' knowledge, misconceptions, and learning needs

Module: Getting Acquainted with the Model Instructional Unit

Essential Question: How can we use the Model Instructional Unit to think about how we can improve our own instruction?

Presenter Goals

- Facilitate an exploration of a QualityCore model unit
- Assist groups in resolving questions and concerns
- Highlight examples of embedded assessments in the units
- Point to the instructional practices that are used in the model units

Participant Objectives

- Locate the key features of a QualityCore model unit
- Consider how to incorporate key features of the model unit into participants instruction
- Identify one or more practices that participants can immediately incorporate into their own teaching

Module: Creating a Course Syllabus

Essential Question: How can we use the QualityCore Course Syllabus as a model for improving the rigor and relevance in our own courses?

Presenter Goals

- Explain the rationale for providing a syllabus to students at beginning of the school year
- Lead a discussion on the features of the QualityCore Course Syllabus for a specific course
- Pose guiding questions to highlight the importance of a personal statement

Participant Objectives

- Compare participants own syllabi to the QualityCore Course Syllabus and make improvements
- Draft a personal statement to include in participants syllabi

Module: Using QualityCore Educator Resources in Instruction

Essential Question: How can we use QualityCore Educator Resources to ensure that our instruction is rigorous and relevant?

Presenter Goals

- Review the QualityCore Educator Resources that have been discussed over the last 2+ days
- Guide groups through a discussion that results in charting their next steps

Participant Objectives

- Identify strengths and gaps in participants own units compared to the QualityCore units
- Identify ways that participants can strengthen their own classroom practice using QualityCore materials and methods

Day 4

Module: Looking at Student Work

Essential Question: How can looking at student work help us to better understand what students know and help us to improve instruction?

Presenter Goals

- Present the justification for looking at student work
- Explain the use of the QualityCore Template to Examine Student Work
- Lead participants in practicing the use of the template with examples of student work
- Facilitate a discussion of how using the QualityCore template can improve instruction

Participant Objectives

- Compare student work to elements of a standard
- Explain why a given sample of student work does or does not meet all elements
- Work collaboratively with other teachers to determine next steps for students based on identified strengths and weaknesses
- Use student work as a foundation for examining instructional practices

Module: Scaffolding Instruction

Essential Question: How can scaffolding instruction increase the rigor of my classroom and allow more students to achieve at higher levels?

Presenter Goals

- Use slides to explain the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- Facilitate participants as they consider ways to scaffold students from their own classes based on the work they brought to the session

Participant Objectives

- Explain the concepts of ZPD and scaffolding
- Describe ways to scaffold learning in the classroom
- Apply the process of scaffolding to a lesson or assignment

Module: Incorporating QualityCore into a Lesson

Essential Question: How can I incorporate the QualityCore Educator Resources into the lessons I teach?

Presenter Goals

- Review the Educator Resources that are provided by QualityCore
- Explain the use of the Revising Lessons Worksheet
- Facilitate participants working with partners to analyze lessons and to share their lessons with the whole group

Participant Objectives

- Analyze a lesson for rigor and relevance
- Apply strategies from the Educator's Toolbox and scaffolding techniques to make the lesson accessible to all students

Day 5

Module: Scaffolding Assessments to Match Instruction

Essential Question: How can scaffolding assessments ensure rigor in instruction?

Presenter Goals

- Review the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- Lead participants through similar problems of varying complexity to model the analysis of what is required of students
- Discuss the relationship between Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK) levels and the characteristics that make problems amenable to scaffolding
- Facilitate practice and discussion as participants choose items from the FIP for possible scaffolding

Participant Objectives

- Analyze a task to determine what students need to know, what they need to do first, etc.
- Relate scaffolding to the DOK levels
- Recognize which problems can and cannot be scaffolded
- Create scaffolded sub-tasks for an appropriate problem

Module: Examining Student Work

Essential Question: How can we use the QualityCore Template to Examine Student Work to improve instruction?

Presenter Goals

- Review the steps in the Template to Examine Student Work
- Facilitate a role-playing activity using the template and the work that participants brought to the session
- Lead a discussion of the importance of considering the implementations for instruction

Participant Objectives

- Become more experienced in using the Template to Examine Student Work
- Consider ways to use the template with colleagues in department or grade level meetings

Module: Revising Lessons for Rigor and Relevance

Essential Question: How can we use QualityCore Educator Resources to improve our lessons and assignments?

Presenter Goals

- Facilitate the sharing of participants' lessons
- Direct discussion of lessons to include elements of rigorous instruction
- Model feedback on lessons
- Take a lesson from the text and model the process, charting the process and taking participants' input
- Guide participants (again) through the steps from the Rigor and Relevance worksheet to rethink what was strong and what they might change in their sample lesson

Participant Objectives

- Examine lessons for rigor and coherence with ACT Course Standards
- Apply a process to examine and modify lessons
- Systematically consider elements of QualityCore that will improve daily instruction and assessment

Module: Next Steps and Preparing for the Assessment

Essential Question: How can QualityCore Educator Resources support the provision of a rigorous and relevant curriculum?

Presenter Goals

- Remind participants of the items in the Formative Item Pool
- Focus participants on their next steps in using the QualityCore training and materials for continued instructional improvement

Participant Objectives

- Examine their course syllabus to determine if core content will be addressed prior to the End-of-Course Assessment
- Choose and apply strategies to effectively use assessment items and prepare their students for the End-of-Course Assessment

Educator Resources Binder

(each participant receives a course-specific binder)

1. ACT Course Standards
2. Course Description and Syllabus
3. Course Outline
4. Instructional Units Plan
5. Model Instructional Unit
6. Template to Examine Assignments for Rigor and Relevance
7. Benchmark Assessment from Formative Item Pool
8. Formative Item Pool: Using Test Builder
9. End-of-Course Test Blueprint
10. Educator's Guide
11. Guidelines for Developing an Instructional Unit
12. *On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses That Prepare All Students for College and Work*
13. *Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum*
14. CD containing supplemental Model Instructional Units