UNBOXING THE CURRICULUM

Six steps for any unit, any program. A process for educators.

Every curriculum that lands on a teachers desk arrives with good intentions. It was written by thoughtful people organized around sound goals and packaged to look like it has everything you need. And in many ways it does. It offers a shared story about what teaching is, structures for the year and a starting point for planning.

But a curriculum is only the beginning of the conversation about the teaching year, not the end of it. The gap between what a unit proposes and what a teacher can actually teach with real students in real time with real constraints is almost always there. The six steps below are a process for closing that gap. Not by throwing the curriculum out. By making it yours.

> ***"Curriculum writers do not know what it means to teach your kids. You do."***

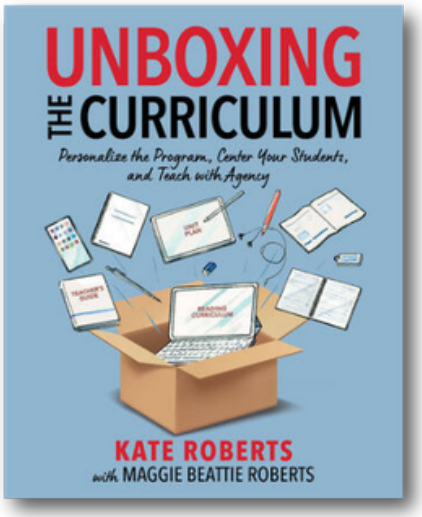
Step 1 **Survey the Unit** CHAPTER ONE	Step 2 **Read Your Students** CHAPTER TWO	Step 3 **Prioritize What Matters** CHAPTER TWO CONT.
Before you teach anything, look at everything. Most units promise more than any human group of students can learn in the time available. The first move is to see that not as a failure but as information.	Maps do not matter if we ignore the ground under our feet. Before setting priorities, look at the students in front of you. What do they already know, where are they struggling, what is the data actually telling you and what is it not.	Once you can see the unit clearly and know your students, you can decide what to teach deeply and what to cover lightly. Prioritizing is not an act of compromise. It is an act of care. When we try to teach everything we often teach nothing well.
What skills is this unit actually asking students to practice? *What content does the unit expect them to know?* *What habits does it assume they already have?* *How many days do you actually have to teach it?*	*What does your existing data show about this group of students? What abilities or skills do they bring to this unit?* *What do you know from teaching them that the data does not show?* *Where are they right now in relation to grade level expectations?*	*How is this skill or content relevant to my students' lives and interests?* *Is it significant to the topic or the text?* *Will it transfer to future learning across subjects and years?*

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Step 4 **Map the Route** CHAPTER THREE	Step 5 **Develop Your Expertise** CHAPTER FOUR	Step 6 **Keep Everyone in View** CHAPTERS FIVE & SIX
With priorities in hand, work to create space for the class in front of you. Some lessons stay as written. Some get tweaked. Some need more time than the curriculum gave them. Mark what to keep, what to move, and what to set aside.	The curriculum sets up the task. The teacher coaches the growth. This means knowing the work deeply enough to help students when they are stuck: trying the assignments yourself, understanding what incremental progress looks like, and building tools that support students across the unit.	A well-designed unit asks what students is this working for and who is it leaving behind? Equity, engagement, and relevance are not extras. They are the engines that make learning work. And coherence across classrooms does not require conformity. It requires shared goals and the freedom to reach them.
What is new or difficult for this group of students? *What can we move through more quickly?* *Where does the curriculum rush past something students need more time with?* *What can be cut without losing the core goals of the unit?*	*Have you tried the work you are asking students to do?* *What does growth looks like at each stage?* *What strategies and tools do your students need when they struggle?*	*Who is this curriculum designed for and who is being left out?* *What choices can students make that would increase their investment?* *What do we agree on across classrooms and what can flex?*

This process is designed to be revisited each year, unit by unit. The first time takes the most time. As the habit builds, the work becomes faster and the teaching becomes clearer.

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