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## WHAT IS THE FOUR-STEP PLAN?

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The following Rainforest Alliance units are organized and written around "The Four-Step Plan," a format based on the latest cognitive research related to teaching and learning. For a full description of this research, refer to the document on this Web site titled "*Research Supporting the Strategies Within of the Four-Step Plan.*" Briefly, the Four-Step Plan assists teachers in arranging and implementing planned learning experiences into a pedagogically sound approach that maximizes student learning. Specific teaching strategies are identified within each step to guide teachers in the implementation of the unit.

The components of the Four-step Plan are as follows:

- In Step 1, teachers connect the concept under study to children's prior knowledge through strategies such as asking questions, reading a fictional story, or guiding a visualization (e.g., guided image, drawings, video, pictures).
- In Step 2, the teacher conveys expert information, both deductively and inductively, through good non-fiction literature written for children or teacher demonstrations. Recent cognitive science research suggests that elementary teachers should verbally convey information, (i.e., lecture), for a short period of time (10 to 15 minutes) and simultaneously include visuals as well as active student participation. Also, in Step 2, the teacher asks low and higher order questions, using Bloom's Taxonomy, based on the information conveyed.
- In Step 3A: language arts and math skills are integrated into the unit. The children practice writing skills, for example, in order to summarize or persuade. Math skills might include graphing, calculating, problem solving, or measuring. By teaching skills after content has been introduced, skills are practiced, learned and integrated within the context of meaningful content.
- In Step 3B, performance tasks which are linked directly to state standard indicators are presented to the students. The students choose which "real world" projects they will complete, either individually or in collaborative pairings. These tasks are based on four types of learning styles: 1) For Interpersonal Learners: writing letters, interviewing, summarizing and graphing; 2) For Analytic Learners: reading, researching, analyzing and writing a book; 3) For Hands-On Learners: creating posters, power point presentations and building a model; and 4) For Creative Learners: writing creative songs, plays, skits, want ads and advertisements.
- In Step 4, the students receive feedback on their work in Step 3B from both the teacher and peers and give oral presentations about the task completed. They might perform role-plays, skits, songs and poems as a way of communicating the results of their completed performance tasks.
- Assessment: In order to determine the extent to which students understood the unit concepts presented and in order to judge the quality of students writing and math skills, teachers use authentic assessments by creating and using rubrics for each of the performance tasks completed. Student tasks are graded using the following marking system: P = Proficient; S = Satisfactory and NW = Needs Work. (In grades K-2, NT for "Needs Time" is used. Students receiving less than a "P" have the opportunity to improve upon their work and receive a better grade.

During staff development sessions, teachers can share completed, graded performance tasks and discuss why a particular grade was given.