

## Mississippi Curriculum Guide Project Information for School Districts

*The Mississippi Curriculum Guide Project needs the help of educators across Mississippi to help us design curricular units, create lesson plans and student materials, review units and lessons as they are drafted, and pilot units in Mississippi classrooms. We hope to include the widest range of participation possible, and we seek your help in making this goal possible.*

*In an effort to attract secure broad support, the project will compensate both direct participants and the districts that “lend” those educators to the project. In addition, we will offer additional incentives to lending districts, which are detailed on the last pages of this document.*

*Here are the principal roles for working Mississippi educators, with details on the compensation offered to districts. For additional information on each role and the compensation offered to teachers, please see the sheet entitled “Information for Mississippi Educators.”*

### Unit Designer

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- **The Role:** Unit Designers will design curriculum units, with attention to unit goals, powerful assessment, and learning activities aligned with goals and assessments. For more details, please see the Teacher Information sheet.
- **Compensation to Districts:** Authentic Education has budgeted \$100 per teacher, per day, for time that teachers spend in training that occurs during the school day. This amount will be paid directly to districts, to compensate them for the costs of substitutes and other necessary adjustments. In addition, we offer compensation of \$500 per day for districts willing to host training workshops in their districts.
- **Time Commitments:** Educators participating at this level will need to devote four school days during September and October. We will offer regional trainings and will inform you of their date and location as soon as that information is available. Unit Designers will complete their actual design work for this project outside of school hours and will be compensated for that work directly.

### Lesson Plan Developer

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- **The Role:** Lesson Plan Developers will work from unit drafts to add detail to the learning plan, creating daily lesson plans and all required student and teacher materials.
- **Compensation to Districts:** Authentic Education has budgeted \$100 per teacher, per day, for time that teachers spend in training that occurs during the school day. This amount will be paid directly to districts, to compensate them for the costs of substitutes and other necessary adjustments. In addition, we offer compensation of \$500 per day for districts willing to host training workshops in their districts.

- **Time Commitments:** Educators participating at this level will need to devote four school days to training during September and October. We will offer regional trainings and will inform you of their date and location as soon as that information is available. Lesson Plan Developers will complete their actual design work outside of school hours and will be compensated for that work directly.

## Unit Reviewer

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- **The Role:** Unit Reviewers will review units once they are drafted, providing feedback on the units as they are written and guidance on how they might be improved.
- **Compensation to Districts:** Authentic Education has budgeted \$100 per teacher, per day, for time that teachers spend in training that occurs during the school day. This amount will be paid directly to districts, to compensate them for the costs of substitutes and other necessary adjustments. In addition, we offer compensation of \$500 per day for districts willing to host training workshops in their districts.
- **Time Commitments:** Educators participating at this level will need to devote two school days to training during September and October. We will offer regional trainings and will inform you of their date and location as soon as that information is available. Lesson Plan Developers will complete their actual design work outside of school hours and will be compensated for that work directly.

## Unit Piloter

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- **The Role:** Unit Piloters will “test drive” the units produced in this project, in an effort to identify strengths and weaknesses that are invisible in a paper document but become evident when the units are taught in real classrooms.
- **Compensation:** Compensation to districts will occur at two levels. First, Authentic Education has budgeted \$100 per teacher, per day, for time that teachers spend in training that occurs during the school day. This amount will be paid directly to districts, to compensate them for the costs of substitutes and other necessary adjustments. In addition, we offer compensation of \$500 per day for districts willing to host training workshops in their districts. Second, because the piloting of units will require teachers to devote significant school-day time to this work, we will also offer a payment of \$500 to districts for each pilot unit it accepts. This fee is paid in compensation for the time teachers and administrators will take reviewing the units, preparing to teach them, and offering their insight into unit strengths and weaknesses. Unit Piloters themselves will be compensated for unit evaluations that they write after the school day ends.
- **Time and Other Commitments:** Educators participating at this level will need to devote two school days to training during September and October. We will offer regional trainings and will inform you of their date and location as soon as that information is available. In addition, Unit Piloters and their districts agree to allow project leaders to visit classrooms that are piloting units, to evaluate the level of success of the unit (**not** the teacher or the school). Visiting project leaders will arrange their visits in advance, at times of mutual convenience. They will also be available to answer questions and provide insight into other aspects of local curriculum, if you desire.

If educators in your district are interested in joining the project team, please ask them to complete the application form or contact

- In Mississippi: Penny Wallin at penny@authenticeducation.org or 601-310-1095
- At our home office: Lisa Rodgers at lisa@authenticeducation.org or 609-466-8080.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### You use the word “teacher” often in this document. Are any roles available for working administrators?

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We have used the word “teacher” as shorthand. We welcome the involvement of any experienced educators in Mississippi, teacher or administrator, working or retired, at any grade level.

### Are these the only roles available?

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No. One of the interesting pieces of this work has involved adjusting our plans for project staffing in order to best integrate the skills and enthusiasms of the exceptional Mississippi educators who have already asked to join us. If you or a teacher in your district has an idea about an alternative role, please inquire. In addition, if, in your district, you have a teacher with an exceptional grasp of her subject area, long-term teaching experience, interest and expertise in curriculum design, and experience with *Understanding by Design*, we can consider that teacher for a half-time position with this project. In this role, the teacher will remain a full-time employee of the district but the district will receive substantial compensation (up to 100% of the teacher’s annual salary) for her work.

### Are there benefits to districts other than financial compensation?

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Yes, there are several. Districts involved in this project will also receive:

- professional development opportunities for teachers working on the project, both in onsite workshops and through web seminars. These teachers will have a deeper understanding of the materials included in the Curriculum Guide and can help introduce it to other teacher in the district.
- professional development opportunities for other teachers. For each district lending teachers to this project, Authentic Education offers a series of web seminars on related topics, including the *Understanding by Design* philosophy, strategies on teaching for understanding, and assessment strategies that foster learning. These web seminars will be available to all educators in your district.
- regular progress bulletins, online message boards, and previews of units in progress, all available on line.
- a subscription to *Big Ideas*, our online professional development journal, for all district personnel. Visit the website for a sample edition: [www.bigideas.org](http://www.bigideas.org). The site requires registration but no payment will be requested.
- a series of short videos, available on DVD or online, on project-related topics, including the elements of an *Understanding by Design*-based curriculum and instructional strategies effective in teaching for understanding.
- in the spring, an invitation for district leaders to attend a workshop in “Leading by Design,” a training which focuses on issues of leadership during times of school reform.
- Note: we are currently in the process of obtaining approval to offer CEUs and SEMI credits for training.

### **Can you offer more detail on the training that Authentic Education will offer?**

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The first training will last one day, and we hope to offer regional sessions in late September. This first day will offer an introduction both to the *Understanding by Design* design process and the Mississippi Curriculum Guide Project. We hope to reach a large, wide audience for this initial training. From there, teachers interested in becoming involved in the project will attend a two-day training in October. This workshop will offer a more in-depth view of unit and lesson structures and will give teachers an opportunity to draft units that they can both contribute to the project and use in their own classrooms. For teachers interested in becoming Unit Designers, there will be one additional day of follow-up training in early November, to review work that they have completed independently since the October training.

For all teachers involved in the project, we will also offer web seminars that they can attend either at school or at home. We will schedule live broadcasts at the end of the school day, and we are currently looking into the possibility of archiving these broadcasts for future viewing.

In the spring, we will also offer introductory trainings to Mississippi educators who have not been directly involved in the project. We will introduce the Curriculum Guide, explain its major goals and features, and help educators at all levels understand both its structure and its promise for raising student achievement.

### **Will each member of the project teamwork independently?**

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No. Our experience shows that the quality of design work improves dramatically when people work collaboratively. Where geography allows, people will work in local groups that meet periodically to share progress and ideas. Educators will also meet online, matched with colleagues in other parts of Mississippi, the United States, and a few international sites where others are working on similar pieces.

### **Will this become a required curriculum in Mississippi?**

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No, it will not. Each district will remain free to decide whether to adopt the curriculum, to adapt it to meet their specific needs, or to choose not to use it. The Mississippi Department of Education has no intention of mandating any piece of this curriculum. Instead, it will offer it as a model.

### **Who will have access to the Curriculum Guide? How will it be made available?**

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The Mississippi Curriculum Guide will be available to all districts in Mississippi through a website. As part of this project, Authentic Education is creating a curriculum storage tool that will allow educators to access unit overviews, lesson plans, assessments, and student materials on line. In the future, as the units are taught and teachers collect student work, the MDE will also be able to include sample student work with each unit.

### **How can I get more information about this project?**

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There are several ways to remain informed:

- If you are a superintendent, you are already on our email list for project updates. If you are not a superintendent, please send an email to [lisa@authenticeducation.org](mailto:lisa@authenticeducation.org), asking her to add you to the update list.
- Visit the MDE website for notices on major events during this project.

- Ask us for more information. We are trying to anticipate the questions and concerns that Mississippi educators will have, but we will not anticipate them all. Please feel free to call or email, using the contact information at the bottom of this page.
- Talk with your staff members who are working on this project. They will be your best resource on project progress and will be eager to share their enthusiasms and challenges with you.

Also, by early September, we hope to have a dedicated website available for this project. The site will include message boards where educators can ask questions and share ideas, sample units for each piece of the growing Curriculum Guide, and biweekly updates on the progress of this project.