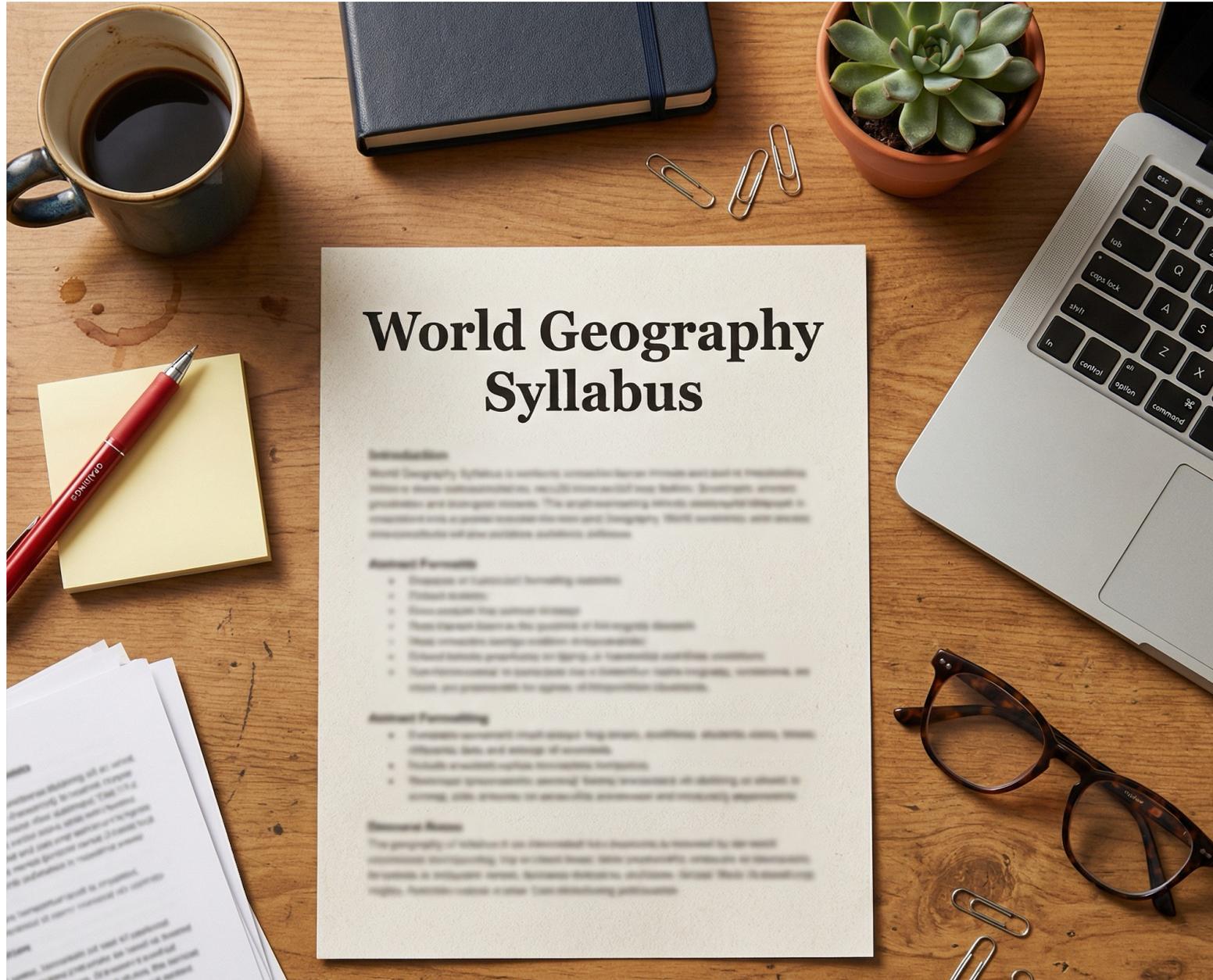


EPISODE 340

Eliminating Waste: Creating A Standard Syllabus For Every Course



INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP SHOW



Essential Question



How can standard syllabi improve equitable access to rigorous instruction, and prevent duplicated effort?

A Textbook Isn't A Syllabus



- Textbooks are designed to satisfy *all* customers, not meet the precise needs of any one customer
- Most textbooks can't be finished in one year
- We must choose what content to prioritize
- The document that records these prioritization decisions is the *syllabus*

Characteristics of a Syllabus



- Written in advance—not “we’ll see how it goes”
- Determines the boundaries of course content
- Outlines the major projects/assignments
- Explains how students will be graded
- Is shared with students and families
- Can be used by other teachers

What Should Be Included



- What units of the curriculum we'll cover
- What chapters of the textbook we'll get through
- What books we'll read
- What projects/assignments we'll complete

"We'll See" Isn't Good Enough



- Teachers have a strong desire to meet students where they are, and leave no one behind
- Faster pacing is harder for teachers and students
- Teachers readily trade better coverage of some material for zero coverage of other material
- We must agree on what we'll cover, or next year's teachers and students can't count on this year's learning

Variation and Waste



- Consistent quality is our goal
- Duplicated effort is waste
- Variation is only valuable for improvement—not inherently good

Head-To-Head Comparisons



- Syllabus A vs. Syllabus B
- Random Assignment to Teacher
- Large number of teachers

Real Experiments Are Hard



- We generally don't have the numbers to do random assignment for true experiments
- Results-based comparisons of syllabi are slow and unpopular
- Double-blind assignment is impossible
- Consensus is a more viable approach

How To Start



- Ask teachers to document what they actually cover this year
- Don't require them to agree yet
- Let them know you want to standardize for next year
- Goal: Maximizing learning

What About Elementary?



- Every teacher should be able to document what they're teaching in each subject
- Homeroom teachers may teach ELA, math, science, social studies
- Much is already specified by curriculum
- Specialists—by grade level

Areas of Opportunity: CAIRO



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