

Understanding by Design in the Classroom: A Practical Approach.

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Good Morning!

Today's Objectives

- To clarify the basic concepts of Understanding by Design
- To provide extended work time on personal units for the school year in light of the workshop

Essential Questions

What is Understanding by Design? (And what is it NOT?)

To what extent can UbD complement other professional efforts such as Collaborative Learning?

UbD: An Overview

The following video provides a basic overview of UbD. While watching, please write down 2-3 questions, comments, or surprises about the statements you hear.

What UbD is and is NOT

Understanding by Design is NOT

The panacea for the woes of education.

A formula for planning curriculum.

A rigid system.

A set of questions or statements posted on classroom walls.

Understanding by Design is

A way of thinking about getting students to explore the most important questions and concepts in their subjects in school.

A framework to help students transfer knowledge and skills into new contexts that require explanation, interpretation, application, empathy, perspective, or self-knowledge.

Understanding by Design

Builds on best practices and approaches from education.

Helps teachers address the "So what?" question when (not if) it comes up in class.

Understanding by Design is a tool.

"Let the **main ideas** which are introduced into a child's education be **few and important**, and let them be thrown into every combination possible. The child should **make them his own**, and should **understand their application here and now in the circumstances of his actual life**" (Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* 1912).

Understanding by Design 101

Big Ideas

Backward Design

Transfer

Big Ideas

"Concepts, principles, and theories that should serve as the focal point of curricula, instruction, and assessment."

--Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook (290).

Examples of Big Ideas

Adaptation
Man's inhumanity to man
Rites of Passage
Poverty amidst plenty
The writing process
Manifest Destiny
Voter apathy

Standards and Big Ideas

Standard: Students will write to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Big Ideas: Writing effectively for various purposes and audiences

Ngised Drawkcab

Identify Desired Results

Determine Sufficient Evidence

Plan Learning Experiences

Why is this called "backward" design?

Transfer

"The appropriate and fruitful use of knowledge in a new or different context from that which it was initially learned."
--UbD Professional Development Workbook (292).

Transfer Happens In Different Ways

- ▶ Application
- ▶ Explanation
- ▶ Interpretation
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Perspective
- ▶ Self-Knowledge

Assessment and Transfer

Your Assessment Plan should require not just a rehearsal of skills or repetition of knowledge, but also—and ultimately—transfer.

But what does it look like in the class?

In the following videos, look for aspects of teaching with Big Ideas, backward design, and transfer in mind.

Planning Your Own Unit

Based on what we have viewed and discussed, how would you plan an effective unit based on the principles of Understanding by Design?

From Big Ideas to Essential Questions

"Demonstrate awareness of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created."

Stylistic Devices

Appreciation of Stylistic Effects

What must students know about stylistic devices and effects? Why are these important?

As we begin to ask questions about stylistic devices, we aim to pinpoint the most important reasons to explore and understand them.

Essential Questions

- Have no "right" answer, and lead to further discussion, inquiry, and exploration.
- Guide and inform learning.
- Address issues at the heart of the discipline.
- Recur.

Examples

How can math help us solve real-world problems?

Why read old books?

In what ways can insects help and hurt people?

Enduring Understandings

Typically correspond to Essential Questions.
(In fact, a thoughtful response to an E.Q. might very well serve as an E.U.)

Are fully articulated, thesis-like statements about the Big Ideas of a topic.

Require plenty of discussion, questions, and exploration before people have an informed grasp of them.

Examples

Math allows us to think logically and creatively in order to solve problems.

When we study literature, we study ourselves.

Insects possess qualities that contribute to the ecosystem, sometimes to the detriment of people.

General Tips

Keep it simple!

- Power Standards
- 3-4 EUs and corresponding EQs

Assessment

One-shot assessments won't suffice.

Assessment Plan

A portfolio, not a mug shot.

Lots of evidence, both informal and formal.

Should ultimately require transfer of knowledge and skills to demonstrate understanding.

Your Task

Create a draft of a curricular unit based on the concepts we have reviewed this morning.

At 2:30, be prepared to post your unit for a gallery walk in which others can view your work and offer feedback.

Reminder . . .

- Keep it simple!
- One performance task per unit is usually smart with several other formative assessments along the way to prepare students for the performance task.
- Align assessments with EUs and EQs.