

Overview

Developing Quality Work

Current research in teaching and learning guides teachers to develop quality work, allowing students to engage in rigorous highly relevant activities, applying their knowledge in authentic problem-solving settings. The question is, “How do we design work for students that develop deep, enduring understandings of key concepts and processes that will serve students well over the course of their lives?” The *Understanding By Design™* unit planning model, developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, strongly supports the creation of quality work for students and is the basis of designing graduation performance tasks and anchor tasks in the Edmonds School District.

About Understanding by Design™ (UBD)

There are three important understandings that are central to UBD practice. First, it is important for teachers to see themselves not only as designers of activities, but also to see themselves as assessors. The old adage, “Assessment drives instruction” is true; what we assess is what we should instruct. Attention to how all the design elements in a unit are aligned makes the desired results a more likely event. Keeping the end in mind (backwards design) is key to the UBD unit planning process.

What are the Desired Results?

The desired results are what students will know and be able to do at the end of the unit of instruction, based on the standards and enduring understandings.

The steps to backward design

1

Identify the desired results (what should students come away understanding or being able to do).



2

Determine acceptable evidence that demonstrates the desired results.



3

Plan learning experiences and instruction aligned with desired results.

*“The business of schools is to design, create, and invent high-quality, intellectually demanding work for students: school work that calls upon students to think, to reason, to use their minds well and that calls on them to engage facts, and understandings whose perpetuation is essential to the survival of the common culture and relevant to the particular culture, group, and milieu from which students come and in which they are likely to function.
(Schlechty, 1997).”*

Enduring Understandings/Guiding Questions

Designing work for students should be explicitly focused on guiding questions and enduring understandings related to standards. Otherwise, curriculum planning remains “coverage” and/or a series of “nice activities.”

Educators want to avoid curriculum that is a “mile wide and an inch deep.” The errors that a focus on “activity” and “coverage” create are an absence of clear and specific content and performance standards for students and teachers. The UBD planning model focuses on big ideas and complex performances, moving beyond prescribed, micro-managed instruction and overly fragmented and isolated lessons and activities. The UBD planning model encourages students to spend more time exploring important ideas deeply. *Less is more.*

It’s important to note that not every lesson and unit will need to be created in a UBD format. Furthermore, the ultimate goal is continuous progress toward an understanding-focused, student-centered, standards-referenced system.

What is Understanding?

Understanding can be defined as the wise and effective use of knowledge and skill in varied, important, realistic, and novel contexts (Wiggins, 2001). Grant Wiggins describes six facets of understanding:

1. Explanation — constructing theories and their supporting ideas, to answer what, why, and how.
2. Interpretation — making meaning of events, stories, translations.
3. Application — applying knowledge to new situations and diverse contexts.
4. Perspective — understanding other points of view, developing critical stance.
5. Empathy — transitioning to someone else’s perspective (walking in someone else’s shoes).
6. Self Knowledge — recognizing the limits of one’s own understanding (Metacognition--thinking about your thinking).

Enduring Understandings

Enduring Understandings are core generalizations about the big ideas. They are unobvious inferences drawn from the facts. An enduring understanding is an inference that requires inquiry and student-centered construction if it is to be understood. Just stating an Enduring Understanding does not mean that a student will understand it. Enduring Understandings include overarching understandings which focus on transferable, recurring ideas as well as topical understandings that focus on a very specific idea in a content area or course. They relate to the real world and help to answer the question, “Why do we care?”

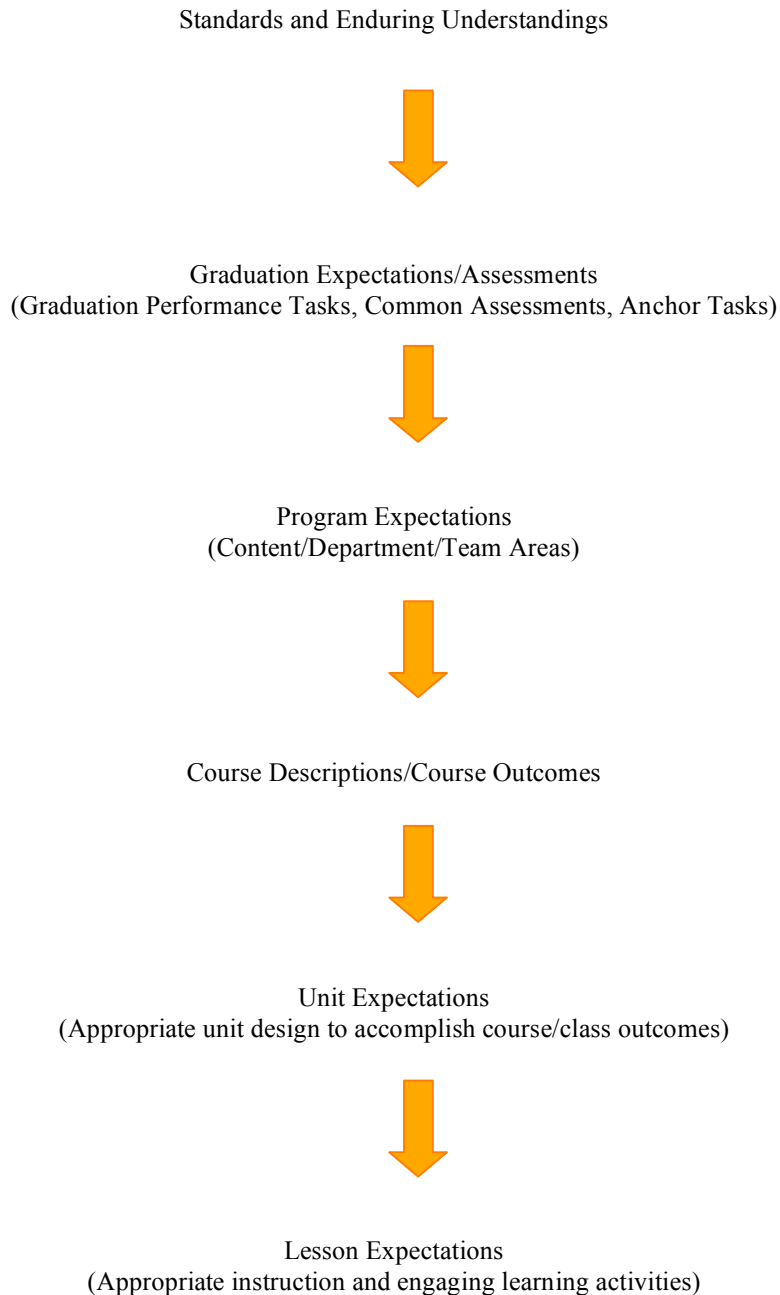
Guiding Questions

Guiding Questions direct what students study and investigate about a subject’s enduring concepts, important generalizations, critical content items, and processes and skills. Guiding Questions are open-ended: there is no “single” answer. Guiding Questions are arguable and require a well-reasoned response. Such questions are generative in nature: they spark inquiry and raise other questions. They are recurring questions that can and should be revisited. Guiding Questions lead students to the big ideas, or enduring understandings and core processes. Just as there are overarching and topical understandings, there are overarching and topical guiding questions. Teachers use guiding questions to organize programs, courses, and units of study.

Planning Backwards

Keeping the end in mind (backwards design) is key to the UBD unit planning process (see previous page). Below is an example of how we plan backwards in the Edmonds School District.

Planning Backwards



The Unit Planning Template

This template identifies the key components and steps to designing a unit of study.

Identify the Desired Results	
Standards	What are the Edmonds Curriculum Framework content and performance standards that this unit will address?
Enduring Understandings	What are the desired Edmonds Curriculum Framework enduring understandings?
Guiding Questions	What Edmonds Curriculum Framework guiding questions will foster further inquiry, understanding, and transfer of learning?
Key Processes and Skills	What Edmonds Curriculum Framework key processes and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?
Determine Acceptable Evidence	
Tasks	Through what authentic, rigorous classroom tasks will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results?
Assessment Evidence	Through what other evidence will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results? Match learning targets with the most effective methods of assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diagnostic Assessment (for prior knowledge and skills/possible misunderstandings) ○ Selected Response ○ Created Response ○ Performance Assessment ○ Personal Communication ○ Observation ○ Anecdotal Evidence
Self-reflection and Self-assessment	How will students reflect upon and assess their own learning?
Planning Learning Experiences and Instruction	
Sequence of Instructional Activities/Lessons	How will the design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help students know where they are going and why? ○ Hook all students and hold their interest? ○ Incorporate learning experiences that help students gain the knowledge and skills needed to equip students for the required assessments? ○ Provide opportunities for students to apply and generalize their learning? ○ Provide opportunities to rethink and revise and refine their understandings and the work? ○ Ask students to exhibit their understanding?

The Unit Planning Template

Use this template to build your own unit of study. An electronic version of this template will be available online.

Unit Planning	
Brief Summary of Unit: Including curricular context	
Unit Design Status	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Completed template (stages 1,2,3)<input type="checkbox"/> Completed blueprint for each performance task<input type="checkbox"/> Completed rubrics<input type="checkbox"/> Directions to students and teachers<input type="checkbox"/> Materials and resources listed<input type="checkbox"/> Suggested accommodations<input type="checkbox"/> Suggestions extensions/enrichment <p>Status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Initial draft (Date: _____)<input type="checkbox"/> Revised draft (Date: _____)<input type="checkbox"/> Peer reviewed<input type="checkbox"/> Content reviewed<input type="checkbox"/> Field Tested<input type="checkbox"/> Validated<input type="checkbox"/> Anchored	

The Unit Planning Template

STAGE ONE: Identify the Desired Results	
Content	
List subject areas and critical content	
Enduring Understandings Addressed	Guiding Questions (Guiding the unit and focusing teaching/learning)
Student will understand that...	
Knowledge and Skills	
Student will know that...	Student will be able to...

The Unit Planning Template

STAGE TWO: Determine Acceptable Evidence	
Performance Task (Product, Performance, Purpose) Description	
<p>What evidence will show that students understand? (See Performance Task Blueprint on next page). Include GRASPS (goal, role, audience, scenario, purpose, and standards)</p>	
<p>Goal</p>	
<p>Role</p>	
<p>Audience</p>	
<p>Situation</p>	
<p>Product/Performance</p>	
<p>Standards</p>	
Other Evidence (Quizzes, prompts, observations, dialogues, work samples, etc.)	Student Self-Assessment

The Performance Task Blueprint

This is the blueprint for designing a performance task in Stage Two.

STAGE TWO Continued: Performance Task Blueprint			
Task Title		Approximate Time Frame	
Content and Performance Standards		Enduring Understandings and Guiding Questions	
Through what authentic performances will students demonstrate understanding? See assessment section describing “authentic performance.”			
Include GRASPS, (goal, role, audience, scenario, purpose and standards).			
By what criteria, will the student products/performances be evaluated?			

The Unit Planning Template

STAGE THREE: Planning Learning Experiences and Instruction		
Unit Plan Considerations		
W	<p>To what extent will students know where they are going and why (reason for learning the unit content), what they already know (prior knowledge), where they might go astray (likely misunderstandings), and what is required of them (unit goal and performance requirements and evaluation criteria)?</p>	
H	<p>How will you hook and hold the student through engaging and thought-provoking experiences (issues, oddities, problems, challenges) that point toward big ideas (through inquiry, research, problem-solving, and experimentation), guiding questions, and performance tasks? How will you honor their different styles, interests and abilities?</p>	
E	<p>What learning experiences will help students explore the enduring understandings and guiding questions? What instruction is needed to equip students for their final performances?</p>	
R	<p>How will you cause students to reflect and rethink to dig deeper into the core ideas? How will you guide students in revising/rehearsing and rethinking their work based on feedback and self-assessment?</p>	
E	<p>How will students exhibit their understanding through final performances and products? How will you guide them in self-evaluation to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work and set future goals?</p>	