

How do we determine what and how to teach?

Differentiated Instruction and
Understanding by Design

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How can we increase the chances that more students *really understand* what they are asked to learn?

Backwards Design

- Think first about the specific learnings sought, and the evidence of such learnings: what can students DO? How will they show that they can do it?
- Only then can you begin to think about what you- the teacher- will do or provide in teaching and learning activities

Why Backwards Design?

- Engage students in inquiry
- Promote the transfer of learning
- Provide a conceptual framework for:
 - Helping students make sense of discrete facts and skills
 - Uncover the big ideas of content

What's the alternative?

- Begin with questions such as:
 - *What will I do?*
 - *What materials will I use?*
 - *What will I ask students to do?*
- Begin with a focus on:
 - The textbook
 - Favored lessons
 - Established activities
- Focus on teaching as performance, not on student learning

Three stages of Backwards Design

1. Identify Desired Results
2. Determine Acceptable Evidence
3. Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Identify Desired Results

- What should students know, understand and be able to do?
- What content is worthy of understanding?
- What *enduring* understandings are desired?

Identify Desired Results

- What are the *big ideas*?
- What specific *understandings* about them are desired? (Students will understand that...)
- What misunderstandings are predictable?

Big Ideas

- Concept, theme or issue that gives meaning and connection to discrete facts and skills

Big Ideas for HLL's

- Identity as learners
- Shared culture
- Intergenerational learning

Understanding Defined

- An important inference, stated as a generalization
- Transferable big ideas that have enduring value beyond a specific topic
- Involves abstract, counterintuitive, and easily misunderstood ideas
- Best acquired by uncovering and doing
- Summarizes important strategic principles in skill areas

Greetings unit: Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand that:
 - Greetings and “small talk” require cultural knowledge as well as linguistic skills.
 - How you approach someone for a greeting establishes or affirms your relationship to them.
 - Language or culture specific understandings?

Essential Questions

- Overarching v. Topical Questions
- The best questions point to and highlight the big ideas
- They serve as doorways through which learners explore the key concepts, themes, theories, issues and problems that reside in the content

Greetings unit: Essential questions

- What do greetings tell us about formality in X culture?
- What does “small talk” tell us about privacy in X culture? About hierarchy?
- What distinguishes a native speaker from a fluent foreigner in greetings and small talk?

Assessment

- The act of determining the extent to which the desired results are on the way to being achieved and to what extent they have been achieved

Determine Acceptable Evidence

- Think like an assessor before designing units and lessons
- How will we know if students have achieved the desired results?
- What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

Forms of acceptable evidence: Interpretive

- listen with visuals
- fill in graphs, charts, forms, graphic organizers, venn diagrams
- follow a route on a map
- check-off items in a list
- draw what is described
- put sentences in correct order

Forms of acceptable evidence: Interpersonal

- Making a purchase
- Meeting and Greeting
- Ordering in a restaurant
- Asking directions
- Face to face or telephone conversations
- Talking about friends and family
- Discussing events of the day
- Making plans
- Negotiating who does what, gets what, with who, how, and where

Forms of acceptable evidence: Presentational

- Brochure or Itinerary
- Letter
- Web pages (Facebook/myspace page)
- Video or Podcasts
- Advertisement
- Agenda, Schedule or Plan of the day, week
- New beginning or ending of story, song
- Demonstration
- TV or Radio spot
- Design a survey and present findings
- Public Service Announcement or Infomercial
- Essays, Plays
- Poem, Song, Rap

Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

- Given the identified results and evidence of understanding, what are the most appropriate instructional activities?
- What facts, concepts, and skills will students need in order to perform effectively and achieve desired results?
- What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills?
- What will need to be taught and how will it best be taught in light of performance goals?

Leading to better differentiation

- When you know where you're headed, it's easier to plan for any necessary detours.
- Similarly, if you start with what the students must be able to do and know, you can adjust to variation in skill levels and interests.

STARTALK,

- Tomlinson, C.A., and McTighe, Jay.
Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design. Alexandria, VA: ACSD, 2006.