Curriculum Design

Overview

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (1998).

Understanding by Design

What is a "unit"?

A unit is a coherent set of lessons, organized around a theme, a performance, an idea, or text

A Unit is *big enough* to help us avoid -

- **micro-managing our lessons**
- **overlooking complex performance goals**

A Unit is *small enough* to help us avoid -

- **vague and unhelpful planning, typically ending in "coverage"**

http://www.ubdexchange.org/user/resources

Overarching Unit Elements

Design elements that cut across units, courses, subjects, and programs

- **Enduring Understandings**
- **Essential Questions**
- **Performance Tasks**
- **Rubrics or Scoring Guides**

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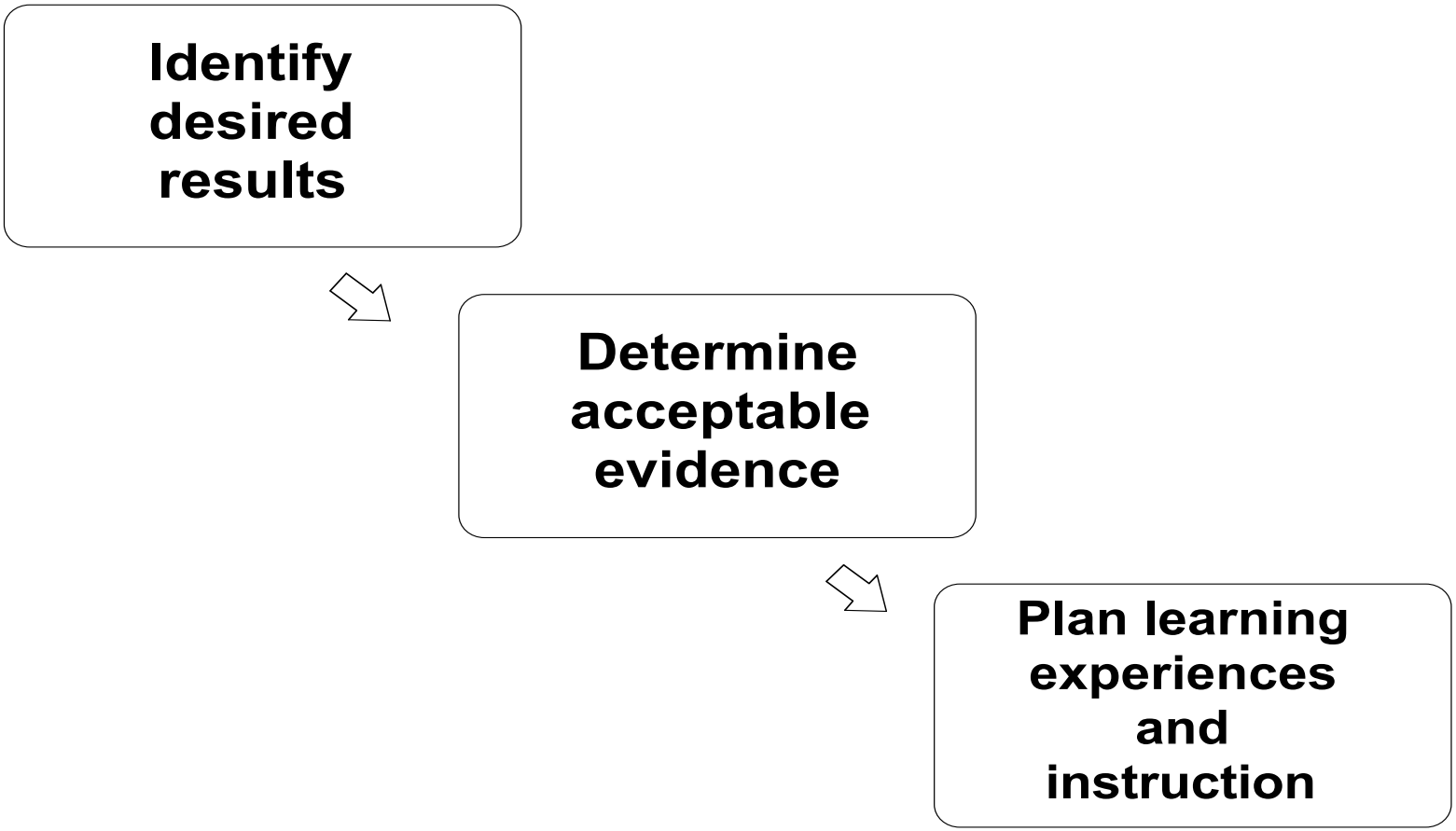
Backward Design

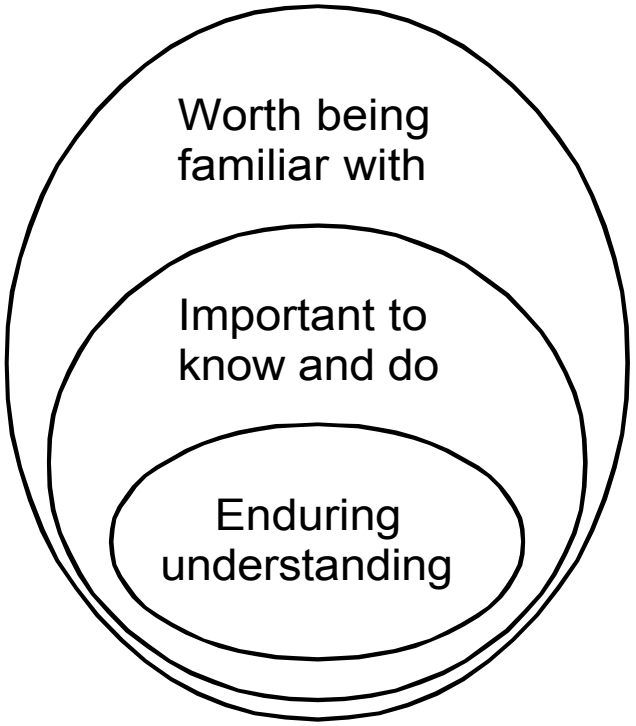
Stages in Backward Design Process



Stage 1:
Identify Desired Results

- Consider the unit goals
- Examine the content standards (national, state, district)
- Review curriculum expectations

Curriculum Priorities Framework



Possible content:
topics, skills, resources

Limit choices:
facts, concepts, principles

Most selective:
the big ideas and understandings

Stage 1:
Identify Desired Outcomes (Enduring Understanding)

Does the idea, topic, or process have *enduring value beyond the classroom*?

- **Does the idea, topic, or process *reside at the heart of the discipline*?**
- **To what extent does the idea, topic, or process *require "uncoverage"?***
- **To what extent does the idea, topic, or process *offer potential for engaging students*?**

Questions:
Doorways to Understanding

Essential Questions	Unit/Lesson Questions
Go to the heart of the discipline	Provide subject and topic specific doorways to essential questions
Recur naturally throughout one's learning and in the history of the discipline	Have no obvious "right" answer
Raise other important questions	Are deliberately framed to provide and sustain student interest

Stage 2:
Determine Acceptable Evidence

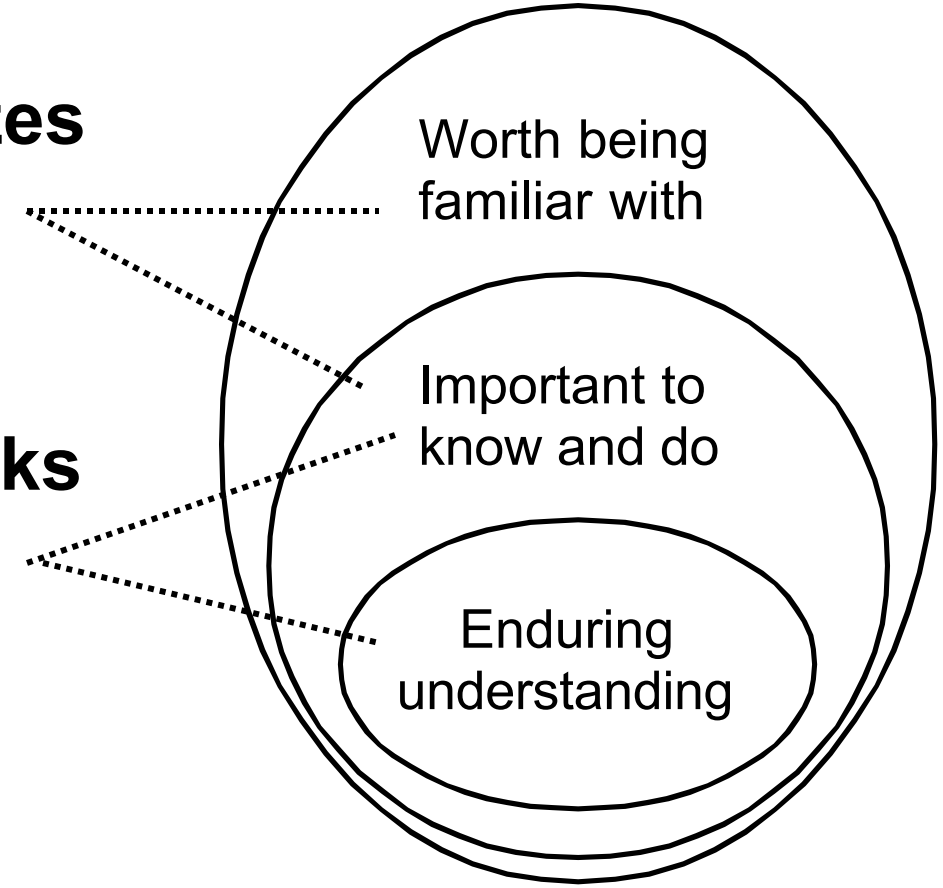
- Think in terms of the “collected assessment evidence needed to document and validate that the desired learning has been achieved” (p.12)
- Collect evidence over time
- Use a range of assessment methods

Types of Assessments

- **Informal Checks for understanding**
  - Oral questions
- **Observations and Dialogue**
  - Teacher observation of student performance
  - Discourse with students
- **Quiz and Tests**
  - Traditional paper and pencil format
  - Selected-response or Constructed-response
- **Academic Prompts**
  - Open-ended prompts that require critical thinking
- **Performance Tasks and Projects**
  - Complex, open-ended, and authentic work

Curriculum Priorities and Assessments

- **Traditional quizzes and tests**
  - **Paper/pencil**
- **Performance tasks and projects**
  - **Open-ended**
  - **Complex**
  - **Authentic**



Stage 3:
Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

- Decide on the activities to engage students
- Determine teaching methods, materials
  - Blend of Direct Instruction, Constructivist Methods, Cooperative Learning Group Work, and Individual Activities
- Determine sequence of lessons