

UbD in a Nutshell

Stage 1: Desired Results

What transfer goals and content goals will be met?

What should students come away understanding?

What essential questions will students explore and address?

What knowledge & skill will students leave with?

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

What performances and products will reveal evidence of understanding?

What other evidence will be collected to reflect other Desired Results?

Stage 3: Learning Plan

What activities, experiences, and lessons will lead to achievement of the desired results and success at the assessments?

1. UbD is a way of thinking purposefully about curricular planning and school reform, a set of helpful design tools, and design standards -- not a rigid program or recipe.
2. The end goal of UbD is student understanding and the ability to transfer learnings - to enable learners to connect, make meaning of, and effectively use discrete knowledge and skills.
3. Evidence of understanding is revealed through performance - when learners transfer knowledge and skills effectively, in varied realistic situations, using one or more "facets" (explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess), with minimal scaffolding and prompting.
4. Educators are coaches of understanding (i.e., they design for and support "meaning making" by the learner), not mere purveyors of content or activity.
5. Planning is best done "backward" from the desired results and the transfer tasks that embody the goals. The 3 Stages (Goals, Assessment, Learning Activities) must all align for the plan to be valid and potentially effective.
6. UbD transforms Content Standards into focused learning targets based on "big ideas" and transfer tasks.
7. Design Standards guide self-assessment and peer reviews of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for quality control.
8. UbD reflects a "continuous improvement" approach to design and learning. The results of curriculum design and use (e.g., assessment results, quality of student work, degree of learner engagement) inform needed adjustments; improvement of the design as well as of achievement is always possible, and tools are provided for such self-assessment and adjustment.

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Stage 1: Desired Results

A question is essential if it -

- has no simple “right answer” that can be looked up.
- is meant to be investigated, argued, looked at from different points of view (not answered with finality)
- raises other important questions, and if the question itself can be fruitfully questioned
- naturally arises in everyday life, and/or in “doing” the subject
- constantly and appropriately recurs; it can fruitfully be asked and re-asked over time, and as a result of further learning

WKBK = pp. 88 - 106
UbD2 = Ch 5, pp. 105 - 125

An “understanding” -

- is the “moral of the story” of the unit - an important inference the learner is helped to draw.
- is transferable to other lessons, subjects, contexts
- is usually not obvious, may be counter-intuitive - and therefore prone to misunderstanding
- is an insight, not a truism
- makes sense of otherwise discrete facts - it “connects the dots”
- is a specific generalization, a full sentence proposition: “the student will understand THAT...”

WKBK = pp. 107 - 118
UbD2 = Ch 6, pp. 126 - 145

A transfer goal -

- states what students should be able to do with knowledge and skill, on their own, in general terms, in the long run.
- frames content standards as performance standards
- answers the “Why?” and “What can you do with this?” questions

UbD2 = pp. 39 - 43; 78 - 81

Knowledge & Skill -

- states what students should know and be able to do as a result of the unit.
- reflects both the targeted knowledge and skill and the enabling knowledge and skill implied in the understanding-related goals

WKBK = pp. 119 - 125

STAGE 1

1. The focus in STAGE 1 is “big ideas” - making sure that our learning goals are framed in terms of the important concepts, issues, themes, strategies etc. that are at the heart of learning for understanding.
2. Research on learning has conclusively shown that students need to see the Big Picture if they are to be able to make sense of their lessons and, especially, transfer their learning to new lessons, new issues and problems, and real-world situations.
3. A focus on understanding means that we must also be mindful of potential student misunderstandings and typical transfer deficits. Establishing clear and explicit goals also means predicting the trouble spots that are likely to arise in teaching and assessing.
4. Resist making a long indiscriminate list of possible goals that are in any way related to the unit topic. Identify only those Standards, knowledge, skills, understandings, and questions that you plan to assess in STAGE 2 and teach to in STAGE 3.
5. It is important to make explicit the transfer goal at the heart of the unit, even if such a goal is not explicit in the state standards you write down in the GOALS box of the Template. “Transfer” refers to the ultimate desired accomplishment: what, in the end, should students be able to *do* with all this ‘content’, on their own, if this and other related units are successful?

WKBK = UbD Professional Development Workbook
UbD2 = 2nd ed. of Understanding by Design

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Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task(s):

- are needed as evidence of understanding because we have to see if the learners can apply their learning to various problems, situations, and contexts.
- should be as faithful as possible to real-world contexts, demands, messiness, audiences, and purposes
- should be written in the GRASPS format to make assessment tasks more authentic and engaging
- must be assessed using valid criteria and indicators, reflective of not only quality performance but related to the Desired Results of Stage 1.
- reflect the 6 Facets of understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-understanding

WKBK = pp. 159 - 179; GRASPS pp. 170 - 172

UbD2 = pp. 146 - 171

Other Evidence -

- is non-performance-based evidence collected to assess various Desired Results of Stage 1.
- is the place to identify conventional tests, quizzes, and assignments that round out the assessment picture of Stage 1.
- can overlap the performance-based evidence, thereby increasing the reliability of the overall assessment (especially if the performance task was done as a group)

WKBK = pp. 142 - 154

STAGE 2

1. The focus in STAGE 2 is "valid evidence" - making sure that what we assess and how we assess follows logically from the STAGE 1 goals.
2. Assessing for understanding requires evidence of the student's ability to insightfully explain or interpret their learning - to "show their work" and to "justify" or "support" their performance/product with commentary.
3. Assessing for understanding also requires evidence of the student's ability to apply their learning in new, varied, and realistic situations - "doing" the subject as opposed to merely answering pat questions (transfer).
4. The 6 Facets of Understanding provide a helpful framework for building appropriate assessment tasks:
 - Explain: the student generalizes, makes connections, has a sound theory
 - Interpret: the student offers a plausible and supported account of text, data, experience
 - Apply: the student can transfer, adapt, adjust, address novel problems
 - Perspective: the student can see from different points of view
 - Empathy: the student can walk in the shoes of people/characters
 - Self-understanding: the student can self-assess, see the limits of their understanding
5. GRASPS is an acronym to help designers construct authentic scenarios for performance tasks:
 - Goal: the goal or challenge statement in the scenario
 - Role: the role the student plays in the scenario
 - Audience: the audience/client that the student must be concerned with in doing the task
 - Situation: the particular setting/context and its constraints and opportunities
 - Performance: the specific performance or product expected
 - Standards: the standards/criteria by which the work will be judged

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Stage 3: Learning Plan

The learning activities -

- should be derived from the goals of Stage 1 and the assessments of Stage 2 to ensure the alignment of the plan and the effectiveness of the activities.
- should be thought through in terms of WHERETO:
 - Where is the unit headed?
 - Hook the learner with engaging work
 - Equip for understanding, experience and explore the big ideas
 - Rethink opinions, revise ideas and work
 - Evaluate your work and adjust as needed
 - Tailor the work to reflect individual needs, interests, styles
 - Organize the work flow to maximize in-depth understanding and success at the summative tasks
- should reflect the teaching approach that is logically required by the goals, not the teaching approach that is most comfortable for or familiar to the teacher.

*WKBK = pp.212 - 237; WHERETO pp. 214 - 226
UbD2 = Chapters 9 & 10; WHERETO pp. 197 - 222*

STAGE 3

1. The focus in STAGE 3 is “aligned learning activities” - making sure that what we teach and how we teach follows logically from the STAGE 1 goals.
2. Teaching for understanding requires that students be given numerous opportunities to draw inferences and make generalizations themselves (via a well-planned design and teacher support). Understandings cannot be handed over; they have to be “constructed” and realized by the learner.
3. WHERETO is an acronym for considering and self-assessing the key elements and logic of a learning plan:
 - Where: ensuring that the student sees the big picture, has answers to the Why? questions, and knows the final performance demands as soon as possible
 - Hook: getting the student interested immediately in the idea and issues of the unit, engaging the student in thought-provoking experiences/challenges/questions at the heart of the unit
 - Equip & Experience: providing the student with the tools, resources, skill, and information needed to achieve the desired understanding; experiencing the big ideas as real, important
 - Rethink: taking the unit deeper by shifting perspective, considering different theories, challenging prior assumptions, introducing new evidence and ideas, etc. Also: providing the impetus for and opportunity to revise prior work, to polish it
 - Evaluate: ensuring that students get diagnostic and formative feedback, and opportunities to self-assess and self-adjust
 - Tailor: Personalize the learning through differentiated assignments and assessments, as appropriate, without sacrificing rigor/validity
 - Organize: Sequence the work to suit the understanding goals (thus, often questioning the flow provided by the textbook, which is typically organized around discrete topics)