

# UbD in a Nutshell

## Stage 1: Desired Results

*What long-term transfer goals are targeted?*

*What meanings should students make?*

*What essential questions will students explore?*

*What knowledge & skill will students acquire?*

## Stage 2: Evidence

*What performances and products will reveal evidence of meaning-making and transfer?*

*What additional evidence will be collected for 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?*

*How will the learning plan help students of Acquisition, Meaning Making, and Transfer?*

*How will the unit be sequenced and differentiated to optimize achievement for all learners?*

1. UbD is a way of thinking purposefully about curricular planning and school reform. It offers a 3-stage design process, a set of helpful design tools, and design standards -- not a rigid program or prescriptive recipe.
2. The primary goal of UbD is student understanding: the ability to make meaning of “big ideas” and transfer their learning.
3. UbD “unpacks” and transforms Content Standards into the relevant Stage 1 elements and appropriate assessments in Stage 2.
4. Understanding is revealed when students autonomously transfer their learning through authentic performance. Six facets of understanding - the capacity to *explain*, *interpret*, *apply*, *shift perspective*, *empathize*, and *self assess* - serve as indicators of understanding.
5. Teachers are coaches of understanding, not mere purveyors of content or activity. They design for and support “meaning making” and “transfer” by the learner; and adjust to achieve intended results.
6. Planning is best done “backward” from the desired results and the transfer tasks that embody the goals. The 3 Stages (Desired Results, Evidence, Learning Plan) must align for the unit to be most effective.
7. Regular reviews of curriculum against design standards enhance curricular quality and effectiveness.
8. UbD reflects a “continuous improvement” approach. The results of curriculum designs - student performance - informs needed adjustments.

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## Stage 1: Desired Results

### A transfer goal -

- states the long-term accomplishments that students should be able to *do* with knowledge and skill, on their own.
- frames Standards as long-term performance accomplishments.
- answers the questions “Why?” and “What can you do with this?”

*UbD2 = pp. 39 - 43; 78 - 81*

### An essential question -

- is open ended; has no simple “right answer.”
- is meant to be investigated, argued, looked at from different points of view.
- encourages active “meaning making” by the learner about important ideas.
- raises other important questions.
- 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.

*WKBK = pp. 88 - 106*

*UbD2 = Ch 5, pp. 105 - 125*

### A “meaning” -

- is a student-constructed understanding about a “big idea” (the “moral of the story” of the unit).
- makes sense of otherwise discrete facts - it “connects the dots”
- is transferable to other contexts.
- is usually not obvious, and may be counter-intuitive; therefore prone to misunderstanding.
- cannot be simply transmitted; it must be “earned” by the learner.
- is an inference, stated as a specific generalization: “the student will understand THAT...”

*WKBK = pp. 107 - 118*

*UbD2 = Ch 6, pp. 126 - 145*

### Knowledge & Skill -

- specifies what students should know and be able to do as a result of the unit (usually stated in established Standards and benchmarks)
- 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. A main focus in STAGE 1 is making sure that our learning goals are framed in terms of important accomplishments reflective of understanding
2. The goal of understanding has two connotations: 1) making “meaning” of big ideas, and 2) autonomous “transfer” of learning to new situations.
3. Research conclusively shows that students need to grasp the big ideas if they are to make sense of their lessons, and transfer their learning to new lessons, novel problems, and real-world situations.
4. “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?
5. It is important to state the transfer goals explicitly, even if such goals are not explicitly noted in the established standards.
6. We must be mindful of potential student **misunderstandings** and transfer deficits. Establishing clear and explicit goals also means predicting possible trouble spots in learning and performance.
7. Resist listing all the possible knowledge and skill goals that are in any way related to the unit topic. Identify only those goals that you plan to directly assess in STAGE 2 and explicitly address in STAGE 3.

*UbD2 = 2nd ed. of Understanding by Design*

*WKBK = UbD Professional Development Workbook*

# UbD in a Nutshell

## 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 issues, problems, situations, and contexts.
- reflect the 6 Facets of understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-understanding.
- establish real-world contexts, demands, messiness, audiences, and purposes.
- should be written in the GRASPS format to make assessment tasks more authentic and engaging.
- are evaluated using valid criteria and indicators, reflective of not only quality performance but related to the Desired Results of Stage 1.

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

*UbD2 = pp. 146 - 171*

### Other Evidence -

- identifies needed assessments of Stage 1 goals; includes conventional tests, quizzes, assignments, observations, etc. to round out the assessment.
- can overlap the performance-based evidence, thereby increasing the reliability of the overall assessment (especially if the performance task was done by 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 - transfer - in which they must “do” the subject as opposed to merely answering pat questions.
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, can put in their own words
  - Interpret: the student offers a plausible and supported account of text, data, experience
  - Apply: the student can transfer, adapt, adjust, address novel issues & 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, reflect metacognitively
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

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## Stage 3: Learning Plan

### The learning events -

- should be derived from the goals of Stage 1 and the assessments of Stage 2 to ensure alignment and effectiveness of the activities.
- support student *Acquisition, Meaning Making, and Transfer*.
- are enhanced when the WHERETO elements are included.

### Teaching -

- should reflect the instructional approaches most appropriate to the goals (not what is easiest or most comfortable for the teacher).
- should employ resources most appropriate to the goals (not simply march through a textbook or commercial program).
- be responsive to differences in learners' readiness, interests, and preferred ways of learning.

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 making sure that *what* we teach and *how* we teach follows logically from and aligns with the STAGE 1 and Stage 2 goals.
2. The learning events are designed to address three interrelated goals: Acquisition, Meaning Making, and Transfer.
3. Teaching for understanding requires that students be given numerous opportunities to draw inferences and make generalizations for themselves (with teacher support). Understandings cannot be simply told; they have to be actively “constructed” by the learner.
4. 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, knows the final performance expectations as soon as possible
  - Hook: immersing the student immediately in the ideas 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 understandings; and successfully accomplish the performance tasks
  - Rethink: enhance understanding 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 instruction, assignments and assessments without sacrificing validity or rigor
  - Organize: Sequence the work to suit the understanding goals (e.g., questioning the flow provided by the textbook, which is typically organized around discrete topics)