"Walking the Talk"
Applying Design Standards to our Own Work

presented by

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Peer Review Against Design Standards

"Our profession rarely subjects teacher-designed units and assessments to this level of critical review. Nonetheless, we have found structured peer reviews, guided by design standards, to be enormously beneficial - to both teachers and their designs."

The primary purpose of peer review is to provide feedback to designers for the purpose of helping them improve their designs. However, there are residual benefits. Participants in peer review sessions regularly comment on the value of the opportunity to share and discuss curriculum and assessment designs with colleagues. We believe that such sessions provide a powerful approach to professional development since the conversations focus at the "heart" of teaching and learning – what is worthy of understanding in this unit?What counts as evidence that students *really* understand and can use what we're teaching? What knowledge and skills must we teach to enable them to achieve and apply their understandings in meaningful ways?

Peer Review Process

Begin by reviewing and discussing the Design Standards to insure that all participants understand the unit design criteria.

Step 1 - Overview of unit, with designer present

a. Designer provides a brief overview of the unit and states any issues he/she wishes highlighted in the feedback session. Then designer leaves review group.

b. Reviewers ask only basic factual/contextual questions to clarify their work (e.g. "When during the year does this occur, and what units precede this one?").

c. Designer(s) leave(s) the review group.

Step 2 - Review of unit designs without designer present

d. Establish roles (timekeeper/facilitator, reporter to designer, etc.). The facilitator's key job is to watch the time and to gently but firmly ensure that the designer listens (instead of defending) when the review is reported.

Individual Review

Time: ___ minutes

e. Reviewers silently read the unit and review materials (template, rubrics, handouts, etc.).

f. Each reviewer silently assesses strengths of design first, then weaknesses (in relation to the specific design criteria).

g. Each reviewer fills out ***Individual Review Form*** summarizing design's strengths and weaknesses <u>before</u> discussion of the unit by entire review group.

Peer Review (continued)

Step 3 - Peer(s) discuss individual reviews

Group Review

Time: ___ minutes

h. Review group discusses individual reactions of strengths and weaknesses (in terms of design standards).

i. Group considers the issues highlighted by the designer

j. Group develops a consensus on key feedback and guidance to be offered.

Step 4 - Peer(s) discuss how to frame and report feedback and guidance

k. The recorder fills out the *Group Review Form* summarizing the group's key feedback and guidance.

l. Group selects a spokesperson(s) to provide verbally summarize the review to the designer(s). Also, prepare to share any reviewers' disagreements with designer(s).

Step 5 - Peer(s) discuss review and issues raised with designer

m. The Designer's role is primarily a listener – taking notes, asking clarifying questions of reviewers, and thinking out loud about possible revisions.

Group Discussion with Designer

Time: ___ minutes

n. The Designer(s) may respond to questions of clarification as requested, but avoids justifying the intent, history, reasons for choices, etc. – the design must stand by itself as much as possible.

o. After feedback and guidance is offered, a general discussion of design issues or questions raised by the review may occur. (Note general design questions, issues, dilemmas for the debriefing discussion after peer review is over.)

tips for effective peer review

1. Be prepared to say back to the designer(s) your grasp of their intentions with such clarity and empathy that they will be completely receptive to your critical feedback and guidance.

2. The reviewers should be friendly, honest consultants (critical friends) to the designer. The designer's intent is the basis of the review. *The aim is to improve the designer's idea, not replace it with the reviewers' teaching priorities, style, or favorite activities.*

3. The designer's job in the second session is primarily to listen, not explain, defend, or justify design decisions.

4. The reviewers' job is twofold: first, to give useful feedback (Did the effect match the intent?); second, to give useful guidance (How might the gaps in intent vs. effect be removed? How might the design be improved, given the intent?).

5. Designers typically assume that their design is more self-evident than it is. *Imagine yourself to be a naive student:* would you know what to do? Would the flow of the unit be obvious? Do you now how you will be assessed? Is the purpose of the work clear? Etc.

6. The key criterion for judging the success of a peer review: The designer feels that the design was understood by peers and improved (or validated) by the subsequent critique and discussion.

7. Always begin by offering feedback in those areas where the design most conforms to the design criteria, describing in detail how/where the design met those criteria.

8. Reviewers give feedback, making clear the basis for the comments in the match (or mismatch) between targeted achievements, assessments, and design of learning and teaching, in reference to the design standards. Couching feedback about possible mismatches in question or conditional form may be appropriate: "We wondered about the validity of the assessment task, in light of the specified goal..." "If your aim is critical thinking, then the assessments don't seem to demand more than recall..."

9. Reviewers give guidance in each area where they perceive a gap between intent and effect or some confusion about the design's purpose or execution. Note that guidance should improve the designer's intent, not substitute the reviewers' tastes or goals for such a unit.

Getting Started with Peer Review

ideas for introducing peer review

Peer review against design standards is foreign to many teachers. Consider the following ideas for introducing design standards and the peer review process to staff in your school or district.

1. Discuss the need to "walk the talk" and apply standards to our own work (just as we judge student work against content and performance standards).

2. Use the "Exemplary Design" exercise to involve staff in generating an initial set of design standards based on their experiences. Then, ask them to revise the Exercise based on the standards they identified. Discuss the benefits of using explicitly stated standards to improve curriculum and assessment designs.

3. Introduce and discuss the UbD Design Standards. You may wish to select a subset of Standards for starters. Model their use with a sample design (e.g., *Test 4 - Validity* using the "diorama" assessment task).

4. Ask staff to review a lesson, unit (such as "Prairie Life"), or assessment task against the UbD Standards. Share ways to improve the design based on the standards.

5. Introduce the Peer Review process as a means of applying standards to our curriculum and assessment design work. Review the goal, structure, steps and roles of the process.

6. Model the Peer Review process by reviewing a UbD unit. Use the nutrition unit ("You Are What You Eat") or a unit downloaded from the *ubdexchange.org* web site. Discuss the roles of reviewers and designers. (A "fishbowl" process works well to model these roles.)

6. Initially, ask for volunteers interested in having their own work (units or assessment tasks) submitted for peer review.

7. Involve more staff in peer review as people become more familiar and comfortable with the process.

Peer Review – Individual Review Form

Design Standards	Strengths	Weaknesses
Stage 1 - Desired Results *To what extent does the design:* **1. focus on the "big ideas" of targeted content?** **2. frame the "big ideas" around essential questions?**		
Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence *To what extent do the assessments provide:* **3. valid, reliable and sufficient measures of the desired results?**		
Stage 3 - Learning Plan *To what extent is the learning plan:* **4. effective and engaging?**		
Overall Design *To what extent is the entire unit:* **5. coherent, with the elements of all 3 stages aligned?**		

Peer Review – Group Review Form

Design Standards	Feedback	Guidance
Stage 1 - Desired Results *To what extent does the design:* **1. focus on the "big ideas" of targeted content?** **2. frame the "big ideas" around essential questions?**		
Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence *To what extent do the assessments provide:* **3. valid, reliable and sufficient measures of the desired results?**		
Stage 3 - Learning Plan *To what extent is the learning plan:* **4. effective and engaging?**		
Overall Design *To what extent is the entire unit:* **5. coherent, with the elements of all 3 stages aligned?**		