**Understanding by Design – Student Study Guide**Education 495: Teaching Practices in Secondary Education   
(Professor McDonald)

**Introduction**

1. What are the twin sins of typical instructional design and why are they “sinful”? Provide an example of each one. Which “sin” is more typical for high school teachers? Why?
2. What is the authors’ definition of “bid ideas”? List three big ideas from your specific content area.
3. What role do “desired results” play in curriculum?
4. How do the authors differentiate assessment and evaluation?
5. The authors reference Bloom’s Taxonomy. What does that look like and why did he develop this framework?
6. Many people think they understand effective teaching for understanding. Why is this not the case?

**Chapter 1 – Backward Design**

1. Who is the teacher’s audience?
2. “All the methods and materials we use are shaped by a clear conception of the vision of desired results (14).” Explain and respond.
3. How is “backward design” a shift from previous methodology?
4. Differentiate between “inputs” and “outputs.” Provide one example from personal experience or observation that speaks to the issues the authors present.
5. Identify the three stages of backward design (in order). Develop a mnemonic device to help you remember these three stages.
6. After reviewing the template on page 22, and the Nutrition example that follows, list three comments or questions for discussion.

*Note: Become extremely familiar with the template on page 22.*

**Chapter 2 – Understanding Understanding**

1. Distinguish between “knowing,” “knowing how,” and “understanding” so that we can all understand!
2. What is transfer and why does it matter?
3. Explain what the authors mean when they reference the “expert blind spot.”
4. Why is student misunderstanding valuable, according to the authors?
5. Look at the list of common misunderstandings on pages 54-55. Choose one that speaks to your content area and respond OR cite a misunderstanding from your own past educational history.
6. Why is “understanding” difficult and complicated?

**Chapter 3 – Gaining Clarity on Our Goals**

1. Identify the following concepts: established goals, essential questions, knowledge, skills, understanding
2. “Content mastery is not the aim of instruction, but a means.” (59) Explain this quote and, given your experience and role in education, respond with your opinion.
3. Explain 3 problems teachers encounter attempting to use the standard education plan.
4. Define what is meant by the big idea and give three examples from your content area. How are these different from basic terms?
5. List the 8 ways that a big idea manifests itself in pedagogical practice. Which is the most common in your area? How do you know that?
6. Why do we convert our standards and goals into questions?

**Chapter 4 – The Six Facets of Understanding**

1. Define explanation within the context of understanding. What kinds of assessments could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. Why is it important that students “show their work?”
2. Define interpretation within the context of understanding. What kinds of assessments could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. Why is “bringing a text to life” a challenge?
3. Define application within the context of understanding. What kind of assessment could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. Why must the problems and situations be new in assessment?
4. Define perspective within the context of understanding. What kind of assessment could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. What are 3 advantages of perspective?
5. Define empathy within the context of understanding. What kind of assessment could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. How is empathy a way to insight?
6. Define self-knowledge within the context of understanding. What kind of assessment could be used? Provide a question from your content area that could be asked of your students. What does self-knowledge demand?

**Chapter 5 – Essential Questions: Doorways to Understanding**

1. What is an essential question? What role does/will in play in your teaching? What makes an essential question? (consider intent and format in your response)
2. Describe the 4 different meanings for the term “essential” with regards to questions.
3. Can essential questions be used in skills-focused areas? How?
4. What is the difference between overarching and topical essential questions? Provide an example of each from your content area.
5. What four insights are yielded from chart 5.2 in the book?
6. What are tips for generating and using essential questions? Why should they be open-ended?

**Chapter 6 – Crafting Understanding**

1. What differences exist between examples of understandings versus non-examples of understanding?
2. Define understanding.
3. What are the differences between topical and overarching understandings? Provide an example of each from your content area.
4. Briefly describe the relationship between understanding and (a) factual knowledge, (b) skills, and (c) content standards.
5. According to the authors, what are the tips for identifying and framing understanding?
6. Describe the complexity of understanding in the context of (a) misunderstandings, (b) multiple understandings, and (c)fallibility/plurality

**Chapter 7 – Thinking Like An Assessor**

1. What are three questions we must ask ourselves when thinking like an assessor?
2. What is the difference between thinking like an assessor versus an activity designer?
3. Explain the continuum of assessments? What is one example of each from your content area?
4. Identify “performance task.” Note: this is not a short description.
5. What is the difference between problems and exercises?
6. How can you frame performance tasks using GRASPS?

**Chapter 8 - Criteria and Validity**

1. What is a rubric? Describe the two types? Which one should assessors use (according to the authors)? Why?
2. What is validity? What is challenging with validity and assessment?
3. How does validity affect rubric design?
4. How are reliability and assessment evidence connected?
5. In your own words, summarize the general guidelines offered by the authors? (p. 189)
6. Think back to your assessments from high school. Which ones stand out as positive? Why? Which ones stand out as negative? Why? How do you feel about assessments?

**Chapter 9 – Planning for Learning***Note: A discussion with your mentor teacher is necessary for completion of the assignment for Chapter 9. Consider looking ahead and having that conversation.*

1. What is the difference between *teaching* and *learning activities*? What is the importance of each?
2. What does it mean for a good plan to be engaging and effective? Your answer should consider the characteristics of best designs. What (potential) challenges does this bring in your classroom? Suggestion: ask your mentor teacher!
3. Identify the WHERETO framework. For each, summarize what is meant, explain – in your own words – the importance of the step, provide an example from your specific content area, and identify one challenge your mentor teacher faces with each part.
4. How can the six facets of understanding be used in Stage 3? Provide an example of a learning activity for each stage with regards to your content area.
5. Think of the best teacher that you had in high school. What made their *teaching* and *learning activities* so memorable and long-lasting? What are three things that they did in the classroom regarding instruction that you wish to emulate?

**Chapter 10 – Teaching for Understanding**

1. What is the difference between *coverage* and *uncoverage*? What role does understanding play in both? How can we, as teachers, get beyond oversimplification in the classroom?
2. What is important about the textbook in your classroom experience? Why is using the textbook as a syllabus a key misunderstanding? (consider Figure 10.1)
3. Why is designing the right experiences the teacher’s most crucial role according to the textbook? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. What are the three types of teaching summarized by the authors of the text? What are some examples of each? Is lecturing always bad? Is discovery learning always good? Considering both the misconception alert and your own experiences, explain your answer.
5. What are some ways we might assess student learning throughout a given unit (long before they have to take the “test”)? What strategies have you seen in your experiences at Jordan High School? Have any been more successful than others? Which do you like the most and why?