This week we are posting work for two weeks. Most of you are getting close to completing the main sections of your units, and we don’t want to hold you up by not posting directions you need in order to keep moving. Below you will also find the schedule for the remainder of the semester so you can plan ahead. We know these weeks will fly!

For the next two weeks we will focus on these questions:

1. **How will you help students find the answers and how will you know if they’re headed in the right direction?**

**Instructional Sequence Directions:**

Your answer to these questions will evolve as you build the instructional sequence for your unit. We are actually looking for more of a detailed timeline than a series of lesson plans. We realize that lesson plans will emerge as you teach, and that any set of lesson plans will need to continually change to meet the realities of day-to-day work with students. With that in mind, what we are looking for is your road map. You will list the steps that you and your students will take as you search for answers to the essential questions. Please take another look at some of those ARCTIC units for a concrete visual of what this might look like. You will note that some of those unit designers used much more detail than others. You also will note that they included, as separate documents, lesson plans to accompany their timelines. To repeat and emphasize: **We are not requiring you to write separate lesson plans!** The ARCTIC folks had much more time to work on these units than we have this semester. The timeline will need to include the following:

- An estimation of the number of days or class periods required for each step
- A very brief description of the focus for each step
- Strategies you will use for that step, to include technology use, groupings, etc.

Basically, how you think you will structure this step.

We have found this stage of unit design most helpful when we continue to work in a backward mode. We start at the END of our timeline. We write in the target end-date and the final task first (If you don’t know when you will teach this unit, you don’t have to use actual dates. You may just label each step or phase with terms like, week 1, day 2.) From there, we continue backward, working to fit in all of the steps, in the correct sequence. We find that this way we are more likely to allow enough time for each stage of the unit.

We need enough information in your timelines so that we can see how this unit will actually unfold. **We should see all the items on your Know and Do Lists represented in your timeline. They should be taught in a scaffolded sequence that enables students to gain the enduring understandings and complete the culminating task(s)**
successfully. Chapter 10 in *Understanding By Design* will help you think through strategies selection in terms of which might be most effective for particular steps in your unit.

Looking at the timelines in these ARCTIC units may help:
- Rain, Rain Go Away
- Forces That Change the Earth
- Solar System
- Planning and Mapping a School Garden

You will see that some of these teachers used their unit questions as the base for each step in their instructional sequences. That works if you choose to go that route.

**Dipstick (formative assessment) Instructions:**
Dipstick is not a Grant Wiggins term! We decided to use it a few years ago as a metaphorical reference to the process of checking where students are in terms of gaining understandings, knowledge and skills. A bit like checking the oil level in the car. If you don’t stop and use the dipstick, you might end up with a frozen engine!

Again, you might want to look at the ARCTIC units for examples.

Your dipstick list should share strategies and methods you will use to check for understanding as you move through the unit with your students. How will you know if they understand? If they are gaining the knowledge and skills they need? These dipsticks might look like traditional assessment (paper/pencil quizzes or tests, essay tests, etc.), or they may be less traditional types of assessment (authentic tasks like teaching somebody else something they’ve learned), or they might be quick checks for understandings (like handing out index cards and having students write one idea that they really understand on one side and an idea that is unclear or a question they have on the other side). You can find a great list of ideas for checking understanding in *Understanding By Design* on pages 66 and 67. That entire chapter, Implications for Teaching, may help you think through your formative assessment.

**Student Self-assessment Instructions:**
You will also find a section in the unit template for student self-assessment. The dipsticks and the self-assessments might very well do some crossing over. Reviewing student self-assessments is a very good way to check for understanding. Do list, though, ways in which you plan to have student self-assess. You will find much discussion of ongoing assessment in your text. You may also want to insert your dipsticks and self-assessment ideas into your instructional sequence, so they don’t get left in the dust during actual instruction.

2. **How will technology help meet the needs of all learners?**
This information should help you with the Accommodations section in the unit template. We know most classes, if not all, include a wide range of student abilities and interests. In this section, tell us how your use of technology in this unit might be steered to help you meet the variety of student needs. This may range from using different levels of text available online to the use of Type II programs that allow for advanced students to work on a higher level, to fostering communication and support between students and community members or other students through online communication, etc. Accommodations may also include how you will group students to most effectively use technology.

To help your thinking about this type of accommodation, we are mailing you an article we came across in the October edition of Educational Leadership, “Universal Design Accessibility for All Learners,” by Cynthia Curry. We were not able to access it electronically, but it should be in the mail by now. We realize you will not likely have access to much of the technology that is shared in this article, but we think the ideas underlying the technology use will spur you on to new ways of thinking. Also, the article includes a great resources list.

Final directions for the next two weeks:

So, go ahead and push on for the next two weeks.

• If you want feedback from Susan and Helena before the final review during the week of November 25, it is your responsibility to email your unit to us before November 21st. Please tell us what kind of feedback you are looking for; tell us what you are feeling confident about and which pieces you would like us to look at most carefully and why. Revisit the unit scoring guide. It will help you think about areas that need more work. We realize that this work is a process; we are watching your units grow stronger. Some of you may be at the point where you do not need feedback for a while. That’s fine…don’t feel you need to get approval from us constantly.

• When you think your unit is about as far as you can get it on your own, go ahead and post it again for your current Caucus response group. If you don’t post before November 21st, don’t expect much response. We have set up new items for this. Please ask your group members for the kind of feedback you would like. Pose at least one question about your unit. It is easy to post your unit as a file in Caucus. Just hit the upload button above the text box and then select your unit from your browser.

• We expect that you will continue to work on Caucus at least two times a week, offering response to others in your group who have posted revisions.

All units MUST be typed into the Unit Template; find it in the Resources section.

Coming Events:
**Week of November 25:** Are we there yet? Grand review. You will team with students who are not in your current response group so that all of you can give and receive some final feedback from fresh eyes.

**Week of December 2:** This week, based on feedback from your new group members and us, you will revise your unit one last time. You will also complete a final reflective writing that incorporates self-assessment. Details to follow.

**December 8: ALL WORK DUE BY DEC. 8!**

**One last note:**
We finally have posted, in the Resources section, an alternative version of that Civil War unit. You did a great job, as a group, of pinpointing the weaknesses in the first version we posted.

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**Week 10 November 4-10**

As promised, this week’s assignment is to complete reflective writing about the use of technology in your unit. We ask that you return to our course essential question:

*How do we create a culture of quality supported by the infusion of technology?*

So, it’s time to think about how your unit is doing this. Each unit should include at least one technology standard as a target, so we know you have that as a base. But, how are you going to use technology in this unit to help create a culture of quality? Think back to the Berger piece we read at the beginning of the course. Think also about the readings and discussions we had about the types and uses of software, and the exploring you did to look at the ways other teachers have integrated technology. Answer this question:

*Technology: How is it cultivating learning and cultural quality in your unit?*

The unit scoring guide we will use to assess your completed units identifies the following as meeting expectations in terms of technology use and integration:

- Use of technology resources assists students in problem solving, communication, collaboration, research, and/or exhibitions of understandings.
Keep that in mind as you work and reflect. This is not really a discussion so much as a chance for you to think through what you are doing and why and to make sure you are on the right track. If, after you think this through, you discover that your design does not yet use technology to cultivate learning and cultural quality, you will want to think about revisions. Feel free to discuss these in your reflection. As a reminder, the scoring guide for reflective writing identifies the following as meeting expectations:

- **Reflection provides thoughtful, specific and accurate analysis, grounded in course readings and theories.**
- **Writing is clear, concise and demonstrates correct use of conventions.**

**Email your writing, Group B to Susan and Group C to Helena.**

Please continue work on your units if you are behind. Also, continue to respond to each other’s work in Caucus as your group member post revisions.

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**Week 9  October 28-November 3**

**Welcome to List Week!**

We’re just starting to receive scoring guides from some of you, but we are not alarmed! We realize that the first stage of this design process is not only the most difficult but also the most important. So, we are happy that you are working so hard on these beginning pieces. Unfortunately, the semester will end whether or not we are ready, so we will keep pushing.

Once you have tweaked your questions, understandings and culminating task and scoring guide to a point of at least temporary satisfaction, here’s the next step:

**What do students need to know and do in order to complete the culminating task?**

This step is quite easy in comparison to all the work you have done up to this point. All you need to do is create lists (make sure you are using the unit template in the Resources section—it will make life easier for all of us) of what it is students will need to know and what it is they will need to be able to do in order to complete the culminating task successfully. This is NOT the place to start thinking about individual lessons, but to think through that culminating task and all that it entails. Not everything you include on the lists might be an actual part of the culminating task, but they are skills and knowledge students will need to gather/master on the way. Please review the ARCTIC units we have referenced before to see what this looks like. Also, we have posted a very short PowerPoint document, titled Know and Do Lists, in the Resources section. This reviews the idea that what you include on the knowledge list is the content stuff, the actual knowledge students will need to acquire the understandings and complete the task. The
Do list is comprised of skills students need. Review the PowerPoint for examples of each so you can see how they vary.

**What resources might help with the unit design?**
As you complete your Know and Do lists, this is the perfect time to start thinking about what resources you will need to support the building of knowledge and skills and understandings that this unit will require. We would like you to create your own resources list that might include a webliography, bibliography, equipment, etc. Whatever is needed to complete this unit should show up on this list. We would like you to particularly focus on technology. Think about what options you have for supporting this unit (you might look back at your software inventory as well as think about access to technology tools such as digital cameras, computers, video equipment, etc.). Because each unit includes a technology standard, we’re sure you’ve already given this some thought. What resources will you need to teach the knowledge and skills on your Know and Do lists?

**Please make sure you are using the unit template in the Resources section. Email your work to both Susan and Helena.**

So, to put all of this in list form for you, this week complete the following:
1. **Create Know and Do Lists.**
2. **Create Resources List**
3. **Continue to respond on Caucus to the culminating tasks of your group members.**

**Next Week:** We will ask you to complete reflective writing about the use of technology in your unit, how it is cultivating learning and cultural quality, so this week you set the stage for that writing.

We know this work can feel tedious at the beginning stages, but we want you to know that we are pleased with the revisions we are seeing. You are getting there!

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**Week 8 October 21-27**

This week, the pace will be slower...that is, if you are up to date! If you have your standards, enduring understandings, essential questions and culminating tasks ready to go, you have completed the toughest part of the unit design. Most of you are still in the formative stages with this work, so please keep working and posting your work in Caucus so you can get feedback from your group. You will want as many brains helping you as possible! We add one new question this week:
**How do we measure understanding?**

Once you have designed your culminating task, the next step is to figure out how to measure student demonstration of understanding. To do this, we will ask that you use a scoring guide (rubric...scoring guide...we use the terms interchangeably). If you take another look at those ARCTIC units in the webliography, you will see that each of them includes a scoring guide used to assess student work on the culminating task. We realize that you may need several scoring guides as students work through your unit, but we are only asking you to complete and share the one you will use for the final task.

We do not expect you to reinvent the wheel. Since this is not an assessment course, we do not have time to focus too much on the creation of scoring guides. If you have a scoring guide you have used before, or if your district has generic scoring guides (for instance, 5 trait writing scoring guides, presentation scoring guides, technology use scoring guides), feel free to use them if they are applicable. Also, feel free to find scoring guides from other sources and use them or adapt them to your unit. Our concern is that your scoring guide clearly states what it looks like when students meet the targeted standards. Chapters 5 and 6, which you read last week, should also be of great help in thinking about how to assess student work and with the whole idea of thinking like an assessor. You may find it most expedient to create your own scoring guide, rather than spend hours searching for something that actually fits your task. If the use or creation of scoring guides is new to you, or if you are looking for ideas and help, check theses sources that we’ve added to the Resource section:

**Creating Assessment Instruments for Technology Products:**
This article shares some great ideas for assessment and the formation of scoring guides, specifically for technology. Also provides a list of resources for help with scoring guide creation...a helpful piece for assessment in general, actually.

**Kathy Schrock:**
If you haven’t yet discovered this area of Schrock’s site, you should! You will find an incredible array of resources for scoring guides and the creation of scoring guides.

**Ideas and Rubrics from Chicago Public Schools:**
Another good source.

So, here is this week’s list:

1. **Make sure you have posted your standards, enduring understandings, essential questions and culminating task on Caucus for response.** We should have seen them first and given you feedback before you tweak and post.

2. **Respond to the postings of others in your group.** We know you may feel like a novice at this point, but examining and responding to the work of others will help you see strengths and weaknesses in your own design. Don’t
forget, before you respond, to use the filters we listed in last week’s instructions. These two are especially important questions to consider when looking at culminating tasks:

a. Could the task be performed well without understanding?
b. Could the task be performed poorly in spite of understanding?

3. Turn in a scoring guide for your culminating task. Please do not create the scoring guide until you are feeling confident that your culminating task is well formed. Get feedback from us and from your group. Remember to look at the GRASP worksheets for help with this.

**Week 7 October 14-20**

Time is sure flying along! Here we are at just about the halfway point. This week we would like you to review and self-assess how you think you are doing so far. Please review the Class Participation Scoring Guide. Then, email Susan and Helena your self-assessment. Note that the criteria for course grades are included in that document and that to earn an A in this course, you must meet the expectations for class participation. Write us a brief note that shares your self-assessment and how you came to the conclusions you did about your work. Also, if you find that you are not meeting expectations, share a plan for change.

This week we will continue working on last week’s question as well as begin to think about a new question:  
**What do you want kids to know and do?**  
**What will it look like when students understand?**

**New Groups:**  
After monitoring Caucus Response Groups for a few weeks, we have decided to make a couple of changes. We will keep just two groups, Group B and Group C. The members of Group A will be moved into either Group B or Group C. Check the document in Resources titled New Response Groups for changes.

We know this response work is more difficult online than it is in person, but we have seen it used as a powerful tool in both venues. Whether face-to-face or online, the groups must be safe. This is a place to receive help, not merely criticism. Resist the urge to fix somebody else’s work. As Wiggins and McTighe say,

* A common mistake in peer review is to assume that the peer review process is meant to offer advice on what to do differently. Such advice is far less
important than accurately describing the design’s strengths and weaknesses—based on design standards…

1. Some of you are just now at the point of posting your standards and enduring understandings on Caucus. Go ahead and do that after you clear them through us, and please respond to each other’s ideas. As many fresh looks as you can have at your understandings, the better off you’ll be. This really is the crux of this design work and you will base the rest of the unit around the selected understandings.

2. Many of you have a good start on essential questions already. If you don’t, now is the time to start! Take a look at the brief PowerPoint titled Essential and Unit Questions. This might help get some ideas flowing and also review and clarify your understanding of essential questions.

3. After reviewing the PowerPoint, do your own brainstorm of essential questions you might use for your unit. Try coming up with at least six questions during your brainstorm, one for each facet of understanding, like we shared with you in the PowerPoint. It is tempting to just grab your first thoughts for essential questions, but we ask that you persevere and stretch your thinking. Experience has taught us that the first thought in this case is not always the best thought. Remember, these questions need to speak to, intrigue and engage your students.

4. Read Chapters 5 and 6, Understanding by Design. Then join the Caucus discussion about these chapters before working on your culminating task. These chapters share many samples of assessment tasks, so if this is new language and thinking for you, read carefully. For Chapter 5, we’d like you to share thoughts about how thinking like an assessor is shaping your unit and particularly the culminating task. Also, discuss what gets in the way of thinking like an assessor. How much of the problem is technical ignorance, strong habits, or misunderstanding of how to think about one’s assessment obligations. For Chapter 6, discuss if assessment for understanding is more subjective than assessment of knowledge or skill. What do we mean by subjective?

5. Practice checking for validity. Before you create your culminating task, we’d like you to take a look at a proposed unit design. Find the document in Resources title Checking for validity. You will see a partially designed unit, including standards, understandings, essential questions and culminating task. Review this carefully. In Caucus, discuss what you see here. Are all the elements aligned? If not, what doesn’t work and why? What are the weaknesses and strengths of this proposed unit? We will share a revised version of the unit later in the week.
6. **Brainstorming Culminating Tasks.** As you start designing your culminating task, remember to focus on alignment with your selected standards and your enduring understandings. Also, this is the time to think about the facets of understanding. Think about which facet is particularly suited to help you check the enduring understandings. Remember, you do not need to use more than one facet as your focus. It is helpful to do some brainstorming, though, before settling on a task. Try writing down each of the facets and doing a bubble type brainstorm. What kind of task might assess understanding through explanation, application, interpretation, perspective, empathy, or self-knowledge? Another way to approach this is to use stem sentences that include your enduring understanding. If students understand ________________, then they should be able to __________. We have posted a worksheet to help you with this. You will find in the Resources section both a blank worksheet and a sample sheet, filled in. It can be quite enlightening just to come up with ideas for each facet, even though you will end up discarding most of them. Please try this and then share your best ideas in Caucus and how the process worked for you.

7. **Constructing the task.** Once you have a basic idea for your culminating task, it is time to flesh in the details. Wiggins and McTighe suggest using the acronym GRASP to guide your task development. See the worksheet in the Resources section. Please give this a try! Often, we see teachers struggling with this part of the design and not detailing the task enough, which causes problems during the next steps.

8. Once you have a workable idea for a culminating task, assess your ideas by passing them through these filters. Is the task:
   - Valid?
   - Reliable?
   - Sufficient?
   - Authentic work?
   - Feasible?
   - Student friendly?

Two more key questions:
Could the task be performed well without understanding?
Could the task be performed poorly in spite of understanding?

Post your standards, understandings, essential questions and culminating task(s) in Caucus. Review the postings of other members of your response group and try to offer helpful feedback. Discuss work in terms of the above filters. Remember to focus on what you see versus what you would like to
see, or what you think the designer should do. You may need to ask questions of each other before you can provide helpful feedback. We look at two kinds of questions:

**Skinny Questions**
Deal with details and factual information that you need to know before you can fully understand the intent of the design. Examples: Will students be in groups for this task? Will students do this part of the task first or second?

**Fat Questions**
Deal with ideas. These questions help a designer think more deeply about his/her work. They are not questions with quick and easy answers, nor are they questions that call for immediate answers. Examples: How might you tweak this task so that it will require students to demonstrate that they have the enduring understandings? Can you think of language that would make this essential question more engaging for students?

Designers may also have their own questions that they wish to ask the group about their work. If you would like specific feedback or help, please put your questions forward.

9. **Review Criteria.** One last item this week! Whew—this became a long list. We have gleaned the criteria for good use of technology that you posted and agreed to in your response groups. Below is the collection. Review the list and then, in Caucus, add your voice to which of these you CANNOT live with and why. We hope to finalize the list and then have you use it as a guide while you develop your units.

Criteria for the effective use of technology in the curriculum

1. Students choose whether or not to use technology
2. Technology is a seamless, integral part of a unit or project.
3. Technology performs a function that deepens understanding
4. Technology resources are known and are used effectively
5. Role of technology is determined while planning learning experiences during unit design
6. Technology is used frequently
7. Keyboarding is taught and reinforced in all grades
8. Information and applications are used critically

And while we’re talking about criteria…if you haven’t, please review the Unit Scoring Guide. You can use this to think about your beginning unit work and also as a guideline when responding to others.
Week 6  October 7-13

This week you will get started on your unit designs. We will develop these units step by step; if you jump ahead, you may find yourself having to backtrack, so please try to follow the directions we give you. Also, please read all directions for this week carefully. If you’ve never done this kind of design work, we think you will find it exciting, although we also guarantee a certain amount of frustration. We heartily believe the frustration is a small price to pay for the results. We should start an album of comments from teachers who persevere through learning this process and then share their excitement when students respond with engagement and a willingness to work hard and dig deep!

Our question for this week:

**What do you want kids to know and do?**

We will start with what looks like the simple steps of unit design but are actually the most crucial pieces and the most frustrating:

- targeting standards
- writing enduring understandings
- beginning to work on essential questions

All of this is part of what Wiggins and McTighe call **Stage 1, Identifying Desired Results**.

When you think you have a draft of your targeted standards and enduring understandings, email them to Susan and Helena. We will respond to your ideas and, after working with you, will ask you to post them on Caucus.

Before you jump into this work, we ask that you first complete these activities:

1. **Review the Unit Template** posted in the Resources section. You will be typing your unit into this template. It seems to work fairly well for folks, but at the end, we will ask for your input.

2. **Review at least four of the templates** completed and posted at the sites for these units (they are all in the webliography):
   - Planning and Mapping a School Garden
   - Alaska
   - Earth History
   - Family History Unit
   - Forces That Shape The Earth
   - Living in an Eagle's Habitat.
   - Rain, Rain Go Away
   - Solar System

Pay particular attention to the selected standards, enduring understandings and essential questions. Can you see the relationships? The enduring understandings come out of the standards but the words may not actually be present in the
standards. You may or may not agree that all of the understandings are at the heart of the curriculum. You may also agree or not agree that the essential questions actually rephrase the enduring understandings, are engaging, open-ended, have no one right answer, sustain student inquiry, etc. But, take a look and see what you think. Looking at other people’s unit design should go a long way toward your understanding of exactly how to create your own.

3. **Review the PowerPoint document in the Resources section titled Enduring Understandings.** This is designed to review what you’ve read in your text and to give you a bit of a guideline that might be helpful as you begin your own design work and then to use to review your work before sending it to us.

Now that you’ve done those tasks, you’re ready to target the standards you will work toward in your unit.

4. **Target from one to three standards** toward which you want students to work. At least one of the standards needs to be a technology standard. This may not seem like very many standards, but keep in mind that if you target a standard, you will need to assess student work in terms of that standard. You may find that you work with quite a few standards as you design your unit, but we want you to target the ones on which you will keep your primary focus. If you do not have access to an Alaska Standards booklet, you can find the standards online at the Department of Education and Early Development site (see the link in the Resources section). Many of you work in districts that have created core curriculum documents based on the state standards. You may want to refer to these instead of or in conjunction with the state standards.

When you type your standards into the template, please include the actual words of the standard versus just typing the standard content area and number. We want to see the whole thing! Also, include the key elements on which you would like to focus.

5. **Write at least one enduring understanding.** You may want one for each standard, or you may find that you really have one main focus for your unit. If you have trouble, reread parts of *Understanding by Design*. Remember that the enduring understanding is at the heart of the discipline. It is what you would like kids to say when you ask them, at the end of the unit, what they learned. It is what you want them to take away with them, even if they remember few details. It is also an idea that can be studied over and over throughout the years, looked at through different lenses and at different angles as students mature. So, we’re looking for the big idea here! Remember, also, that these understandings are more for YOU than for the students. The students, when they answer the unit essential questions, should be demonstrating the understandings, but you write them at this point to guide your unit development.
The essential questions will be in “kid” language; the understandings might be much more sophisticated.

To help you with this task, we’ve posted a worksheet in Resources titled Clarifying Big Ideas. See if you can complete this based on your targeted standards. Think about what is worth being familiar with and what is important to know and do, and what are truly the big ideas worth understanding. We’ve included one completed worksheet and one blank one for you to try. The completed one deals with a social studies/language arts unit on the Vietnam Conflict.

7. **Start thinking about your essential questions.** We’ve posted a link to an article that should be helpful as you get started. Next week we will post worksheets and more information. There is a great deal of information on the web about essential questions. If you are feeling like you need more, go ahead and peruse what’s out there. If you have access the Heidi Hayes Jacobs book, *Curriculum Mapping*, you will find a nice section there on essential questions. More next week, though!

8. **Remember, once we okay your standards and understandings, post them on Caucus.** Also, if you have questions or problems with this work, head to our virtual Coffee Shop. We and/or other students will answer questions posted there. We encourage you to help each other. Susie and Margery have been doing a great job of helping out with technical questions!

**Week 5 September 30-October 6**

By now you should all have your texts, so we are expecting to see a lot of catching up! In light of the trouble some of you have had getting books, we will slow down the pace a bit. The timeline will be revised and reposted sometime this week to reflect the changes, but everything you need to know is evident in the weekly assignment information. It is imperative that you all get up to speed NOW! Use this week to make sure you’ve caught up on all required Caucus postings and assignments. This means you should have responded at least twice in each discussion (except the technology profile discussion which only requires one entry from you unless you have more to say).

So, this week’s questions:

*What does good use of technology look like?*

*How can we teach students to look under the hood?*
1. **Share and Discuss web search results.** Use notes you made on your Internet Workshop form and share the following:
   - The three or four best unit ideas you found.
   - What makes these units good in terms of teaching for understanding and/or authentic learning?
   - At least one unit that you think used technology well and what that looks like.
   - Also, feel free to share one or two examples of poor use of technology and what that looks like.
   - What did you notice about design of the sites and units? What were the best and worst sites you found in terms of design, and how did that influence your use of the sites?

2. **Create criteria for good use of technology.** After you have reviewed each other’s web search results, go to the next Caucus item and see if you can come to consensus as a group on three to five criteria that you might use to identify good use of technology within curricula. Remember, we’re looking at these units and ideas through the filter of teaching for understanding.

3. **Reviewing tools to help students look under the hood.** We have posted a number of resources for you to examine that are designed to help students evaluate web sites. We all know the problems we face with critical thinking and media use. How do we help students not just look at the fancy car but also actually look under the hood and examine the engine? We have some sites for you to look at and determine whether you think they’re valid sites. We also have some sites that offer tools for you to use with students in the evaluation of Internet sites. We would like you to look at all of these, and then discuss in Caucus what you have learned, which resources you found particularly helpful and why, and how you will use this information with your students. Also, think about how this information is useful in terms of your own upcoming unit design. Sites to review (all posted in the Webliography):

   **Can You Believe These? Take a look and see if you can establish credibility for any of these sites:**
   - Headless Chicken
   - Clones-R-Us
   - DHM0.Org
   - Tree Octopus

   **Resources to Help Your Students Look Under the Hood:**
   - Read this first. It is extremely helpful & informative: Alan November: The Web, Teaching Zack to Think
Grammar of the Internet (more great stuff from Alan November’s site)

Kathy Schrock’s Critical Evaluation of a Web Page

More Evaluation Ideas from Kathy Schrock

Media Awareness Network

Next week: We will begin designing units! We will move slowly, step by step through the unit design process. Start thinking about the standards you will target. The ARCTIC units you should have looked at last week used the template we will be using, so you may want to go back and examine some of those again to help steer your thinking. We will also continue reading Understanding by Design, chapter five.

Week 4  September 23-29

We can see that many of you are struggling to keep up and are hoping it’s due to slow arrival of texts. We’ll slow down if we need to, but slowing down now will push us at the end of the semester. If you’re having trouble finding the Wiggins book, try the ASCD website. If you are having problems, please do let us know so we can be responsive.

This week we have two questions to consider:

What does it mean to understand?
How do you use the Internet productively with students?

These questions will surface again and again as we continue working, but we will get a start on them this week.

1. Read Chapters 3 and 4 of Understanding By Design. Chapter 3 tries to define understanding, a difficult task! Read this short chapter carefully and see if you can come to an understanding of understanding. In the Caucus discussion, we will ask you to share your thoughts as well as to identify some understandings you wish students to leave with in your subject area. These should be ideas that are important but not obvious, ideas that cannot be learned simply by
stating them. What, then, might be the misunderstandings that occur when teaching that topic?

Chapter 4 continues to delve into understanding by trying to describe what understanding looks like. The authors share a six-faceted view they have created, stating that when we understand we can explain, interpret, apply, have perspective, empathize and have self-knowledge.

When I first came across these facets of understanding, my first response was, oh no, more educationese! Now that I have worked with these ideas for a number of years, I find that they truly help me with design work. I discovered that I tended to use the same facets over and over when checking for student understanding. I used the facets that appealed to me rather than thinking always about the full spectrum of possibilities. Wiggins’ work has opened my eyes and helped me sharpen my assessments. As you read about the facets, I’m betting you will recognize the ones you tend to rely on the most. I ask you to try to keep your minds open. In Caucus, we will ask you to share a check for understanding that you have relied on, which facet it demonstrates, and then ask you to come up with other assessment ideas using other facets to check that same understanding.

If you would like another take on this idea of understanding, check out the interview with Howard Gardner on teaching for understanding. This was published in Educational Leadership. A link is in the Resources section.

2. **Create a visual representation of understanding.** Use a draw program of your choice, or any other electronic method you wish, to demonstrate graphically your understanding of understanding. Include enough text in your visual for us to clearly interpret your drawing. This activity is designed to help you answer the question, what does it mean to understand. Email your completed drawing as an attachment to both of us. Be sure your name is on the title of the document. Don’t forget about the design principles! If you need help using a draw program, check the ARCTIC site. Go to Resources and then click on Toolbox. You’ll find a link in the resources section.

3. **Complete a web search for exemplary units.** Now that you are becoming familiar with the backward design idea, it is time to start looking at some unit samples. We have provided links to several units that were designed using this process. The authors are all Alaska teachers who participated in the ARCTIC program. If you would like to learn more about ARCTIC, you can visit that website. You will find these links in the webliography below. Use the first links to look at specific projects. The Mask unit linked is an extraordinary project. While it is standards-based, it does not completely rely on backward design. Do take a good look at it, though, as it shares incredible integration of technology.
Also do some searching on your own, using the other links we provided. These links will take you to sites that are rich in terms of curriculum shared. Feel free to do your own search, also, based more specifically on your own interests.

In the resources section you will find a form titled **Internet Workshop**. This is a model of a format you may find helpful with students as you teach them to research on the Web. Print the two-page form and use it to take notes as you search the Internet. Please read the directions carefully as they ask you to make specific notes.

**Notes:** When using this format with younger students, I most often start by having them explore just one site that has been bookmarked on the computers. They are asked to explore specific areas of the site, looking for particular kinds of information, and then are given time to explore an area of their choice in the site. We share back orally with the idea that we learn from each other's explorations and experiences. This is a great way to start kids talking about navigation as well as to help them share information since they will end up learning different pieces of information. Types of topics for group discussion include navigation issues (e.g., What are the best strategies for using a search engine?); content (e.g., Has anyone found a unit about plants in Alaska?); and critical analysis (e.g., How can I tell if this information is reliable?). It is also helpful, after the discussion, to ask students to record what they learned and what they want to learn. There are a zillion ways to modify Internet Workshop! It does work well as an introduction to a unit of study.

4. **Complete the software inventory.** We posted directions last week, but here they are again: Use the Software Inventory form posted in the Resources section to help you inventory all of the software available to you and your students. Read the inventory instructions and decide whether each tool is a type I or a Type II application. Discuss the results in Caucus, sharing what you discovered; whether what you discovered was what you expected; whether there is a predominance of one type of software; how examining this software, combined with completing the Learning With Technology Profile last week, might be shifting your thinking.

We have also posted another article about software evaluation that provides for a much deeper look at software. We’re not asking you to use it, but take a look. It will help you think about your inventory in a different way. This one links software to the different intelligences, ala Howard Gardner and includes a unit that highly integrates science, technology and focuses on the different intelligences. It’s titled Evaluation Criteria.

**One last note:**

We will set up a new discussion item in Caucus titled Coffee Shop. Please ask questions there or make general comments you would like to share with the
group. We figure, if one of you needs help understanding an assignment or aspect of the course, others of you might also have the same question. Feel free to chat in the coffee shop. Bring your mug, put your feet up and your computer in your lap!

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**Week 3 September 16-22**

This week we will have several activities going at once as we try to bring together numerous threads. We are adjusting as we go, and you may find assignment dates differ from those in the course timeline.

We imagine the Berger dialogue will continue a bit this week as some of you still need to respond. We’re glad many of you seemed to enjoy this book. We find his passion and his vision extraordinary and inspiring. Having taught in programs with many of the attributes Berger describes, we know this is a possibility and not just a fantasy. We hope you can see that while curriculum in his eyes is not the most important piece in culture, it has a tremendous impact on the quality. His project designs are authentic, his curriculum deals with the real world and his technology use is authentic.

With that in mind, we would like you to start looking at several things this week as we explore the question: **What is backward design?**

1. **Begin reading Understanding By Design, introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.** Please don’t skip the introduction. This text can be a challenging read, and the introduction helps provide the foundation. This text will be our source for the process of unit design. Wiggins and McTighe do not often speak directly to technology, but keep in mind that you will be creating units in which technology will be authentically and naturally used. I think you will see that what these authors have to offer will foster such unit development.

   As you read, please note ideas that really strike you and why. They might be ideas that are new and exciting to you, or confusing, or troublesome, or just interesting. We’ll do some sharing in Caucus along those lines.

   Make sure you have a firm understanding of the differences between **activity-based teaching, coverage-based teaching, and understanding-based teaching.** Think about which is the norm for teaching in your school. What would have to change in order for understanding-based teaching to be the norm? We will ask you to share examples you have experienced as either a teacher or a student of understanding-based teaching and how that affected you and/or your students. Briefly share the experience and the conditions that supported the experience.
Also, think about which methods you rely on most. What are the reasons for this reliance?

One last question: What connections do you see between the ideas presented by Wiggins and McTighe and those of Berger?

After you have had a chance to start processing all of this, we will share some strong unit examples with you as well as send you on an electronic hunt to find units that you think teach for understanding.

If this type of design work is new to you, please hold your doubts and frustrations at bay for a while. It will come together!

2. Take a quick look at this interview with Helena, published in NW Education. The link is in the Resources section. It will keep me from rewriting all those ideas for you here!

3. Continue with the Non-designers discussion. Actually, BEGIN this discussion! It looks as if most people did not have books in time to begin this last week.

4. Turn in your document demonstrating your ability to use the design principles presented by Williams. This is due by September 22. Remember to email the document as an attachment to both Susan and Helena and to include your name in the document title. Complete directions are posted under last week’s assignments.

4. Complete the NCREL Learning With Technology Profile. You will find a link in the Resources section. Take this profile and see what kind of results you get. Be as honest as you can and base it on actuality, not on your ideal. We will discuss the survey and thoughts it brings up in Caucus. Be thinking about any connections you find between the ideas in this survey and the work of Wiggins and McTighe.

Preparing for next week: We will ask you to begin an inventory of all the software available to you and your students. Teachers often don’t know what is even available through school servers or hidden in technology cupboards! As you do this inventory, please use the Software Inventory form that is posted in the Resources section. You will be deciding whether the software available to you is a Type I or a Type II application. This worksheet comes from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. You will share results of your surveys in Caucus, so start thinking about where you need to look!

You will also discuss Chapters 3 and 4 of Understanding by Design.
A note on Caucus discussion: If you have not yet read the Class Participation Scoring Guide, we recommend that you do so immediately. It is posted in the Resources section. We are not expecting formal writing on Caucus, but we are expecting thoughtful, well-developed writing that demonstrates your reading and processing of course materials. We also expect, once again, that you will enter the discussion a minimum of two times each week. Many of you are doing a great job, so don’t take this as a scolding. We’ve had questions and just wanted to clarify. We will also be asking you to self-assess as we move through the course.

Week 2  September 9-15

Most of you made it to Caucus, we see! If you haven’t, please ask if you need help. Also, please make an effort to post a picture. As we move through this course, we will be asking you, through many of your weekly assignments, to demonstrate proficiency in technology skills. If you take another look at the scoring guide for class participation, you will see the requirement.

A Caucus tip: We have learned the hard way that it is best to compose major entries for Caucus in a word processing program and then cut and paste that response into Caucus. Every once in a while Caucus does not respond properly and entries are lost. So, save yourself major frustration and make sure you have a saved version. When we get to the point where you are posting lengthy documents, you will want to post attachments, but for now it will be easier if you just copy and paste your writing.

We have posted, in the Resources section, a document titled Response Groups. Check the chart to discover to which group you have been assigned. We will use these groups for our discussions in Caucus with the hope that smaller groups will produce stronger community, allow you to write without the feeling that everything has already been said, and keep your from needing to read 15 entries each time. Feel free, however, to read what is going on in the different groups. To ensure the safety of all class participants, please be respectful and careful with your words at all times.

We will expect you to join the Caucus discussion at least twice each week. If you only get on once and post your writing, we will end up with a series of separate ideas. Our goal is to have a dialogue. So, please make every effort to carefully read the responses of others in your group and respond to their thoughts and ideas.

Here’s the scoop for this week:

1. Discuss A Culture of Quality. A discussion item has been set up for each group and we would like you to focus your discussion on these questions:
What is a culture of quality, according to Berger? How does curriculum influence this culture? How does technology fit into the picture?

For this discussion, we would like you to focus on the text (as in a Socratic Seminar), rather than bringing in descriptions of your own classrooms. When you refer to the text, and if you don’t want to include the entire quotation, please reference the page number. Do feel free, though, to share insights or questions that arise from your reading or from the group discussion.

2. The Non-Designer’s Design Book, chapters 1-6. We hope to start a discussion of this book this week, but are aware that you may not yet have the books. We’re hoping you have ordered them by now. If you have the book, you realize that reading chapters 1-6 is not a very time consuming task. We will post the discussion with the knowledge that it will likely continue into next week.

Discussion questions:
How can the principles of design impact student work, and how does this connect to the idea of a culture of quality?

3. C.R.A.P. Yes, you read it correctly! If you’ve had a chance to begin the Design Book, you know that these initials refer to contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. During the next couple of weeks we would like you to create a document that demonstrates your ability to put these principles into action. Make it something useful, something you need to do anyhow, such as a student assignment sheet, a letter to parents, a poster for parent night, a business card, etc. It can even be something for your personal life, such as an invitation. Please email your document to us by September 22. That should give everybody enough time.

Please email your document to both Susan and Helena Make sure you email it as an attachment and that the title of the document contains your name.

Preparing for next week: We will discuss the introduction and the first two chapters of Understanding by Design.

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Week 1 September 2-8

This first week we will start slowly to give all of you a chance to figure out the in’s and out’s of the course site and to become familiar with Caucus, the tool we will use for discussion. Here are the tasks we would like you to complete by the end of the week:
1. **Explore this site.** Check out the course timeline posted in the Resources section. Try the library links, etc. You will find some great resources, just a click away!

2. **Add your name to the class list.** Please enter your email address. If you use more than one address and would like to be contacted at both, be sure to make separate entries for each.

3. **Read the introduction** to this course. You will find it posted in the Resources section below.

4. **Join our Caucus conference.** Just click on the conference link on this site. You will need your UAS student i.d. and your password. If you need help with this, call the UAS Computer Help Desk at 465-6400. If you are located out of the Juneau area, the toll free number is 1-877-465-6400.

5. **Introduce yourself.** You will find the first discussion item in Caucus, Getting to Know Each Other. Please write and post a brief introduction. Let us know where you live and teach, a bit about how you use technology in your classroom now and what your goals might be for future technology use, and anything else you would like to share about your life. We have posted our introductions, just to get started.

6. **Insert a picture of yourself with your introduction.** It is quite easy to upload a picture to your Caucus entry. Just click on “upload a file” and follow the directions. If you do this after you have entered your writing, the picture will show at the bottom of your entry.

**Remember to check this homesite every week before going to our Caucus conference. Detailed instructions will be posted here. You will find yourself confused and frustrated if you miss this information.**

7. **Read A Culture of Quality** by Ron Berger. We will discuss this text next week. Berger presents a stimulating and thought-provoking picture of a classroom that we will return to again and again as we work to answer the essential question for this course: How do we create a culture of quality supported by the infusion of technology?

8. **Review** the National Education Technology Standards (NETS) and Performance Indicators for Teachers, as presented at the ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education). You will find a link to the site in the Resources section below. This course is designed to help teachers meet these standards.

**Please don’t hesitate to contact Helena or Susan if you have questions or concerns.**