Weeks 9 & 10 - Nov. 1 to Nov. 14

Welcome to List Week!

I know many of you are probably just barely scratching the surface on your scoring guides, but I am not alarmed! I realize that the first stage of this design process is not only the most difficult but also the most important. So, I am happy that you are working so hard on these beginning pieces. Unfortunately, the semester will end whether or not we are ready, so I 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 is 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 (specific content) and what it is they will need to be able to do (skills) 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 I have referenced before to see what this looks like. Also, I 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. I 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. I 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, I am 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. E-mail your work to me as an attachment.**

I would also like you to complete some reflective writing about the use of technology in your unit. I ask that you return to our course essential question:

**How do we create an ethic of excellence 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 I know you have that as a base. But, how are you going to use technology in this unit to help create an ethic of excellence? 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 an ethic of excellence in your unit?**

The unit scoring guide I 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 to me.**

Please continue work on your units. Also, continue to respond to each other’s work in Caucus as your group members post revisions.
So, to put all of this in list form for you, 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.**
4. **Complete a reflective writing piece about the use of technology in your unit.**

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

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**Week 8 Oct. 25 to Oct. 31**

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! I will 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, I will ask that you use a scoring guide (rubric...scoring guide...I 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. I realize that you may need several scoring guides as students work through your unit, but I am only asking you to complete and share the one you will use for the final task.

I 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. My 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 these sources that I have 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.** I should have seen them first and given you feedback before you tweak and post.

2. **Respond to the postings of others in your group.** I 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 I 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 me and from your group. Remember to look at the GRASP worksheets for help with this.

4. **Review Criteria.** I 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. Also, ask questions of others if some of the criteria are not clear and try to group some together that seem redundant. You can add your voice to decide if you like the criteria to be in statement form or in a question format like one group created. I 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
- Technology supports student understanding
- Technology allows students to engage in inquiry
- Technology gives students opportunities to connect with the outside world and to contribute their understandings and projects with a larger audience.
- Adults should regularly model all aspects of correct and appropriate use of the technology students will be involved with.
- Technology use should have real world applications.
- Technology should match the resources available.
- Technology use should add to the subject or unit taught, rather than being completely separate.
• Technology should match the skills and needs of the students and teachers.
• Parents should always be informed and aware of policies involving the use of technology in school.
• Students should become informed consumers of the Internet and be able to evaluate and determine reliability of the sources they encounter there.
• Students will engage in technology in a variety of different ways to encompass and incorporate different learning styles and multiple intelligences.
• Technology should address appropriate and inappropriate norms of behavior (digital citizenship).
• Technology should incorporate the six facets of understanding.
• Parents will be involved in the learning process.

Or would you rather have questions as the basis of the criteria?
• Does it meet the "So what" test i.e. is it useful information?
• Does technology simply automate what you could do without technology (still some advantages)?
• Does technology allow us to obtain the same learning but quicker, more interestingly or better organized than without?
• Does technology extend the learning activity?
• Does it cause the students to question the author or topic leading them to critical examinations? Does it lead to higher-level thinking?

Even though you may feel behind, if you are still working on your enduring understanding, essential questions and culminating task, you are still on track. Remember this is the most frustrating and yet the most important part of designing your unit. I think it’s called disequilibration.
Week 7  Oct 18 to Oct 24

Time is sure flying along! Here we are at just about the halfway point. This week I would like you to review and self-assess how you think you are doing so far. Please review the Class Participation Scoring Guide and the Assignments Scoring Guide. Then, email 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 me 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.

I would also like for you to give me some feedback about this course. If the course is not meeting your needs, there will still be time for me to make some changes. I am always interested in updating this course and making it as applicable as possible. Please give your feedback by completing the mid-semester survey on the course site.

E-mail your self-assessment to me by October 24th.
This week’s question is:

**What will it look like when students understand?**

I have enjoyed many of the discussions in Caucus. I would like you to continue your analysis and questioning as we begin to look at our unit designs. Many of you will begin posting the beginning part of your unit design and then adding on to it later. Looking at and responding to others’ work will help you think about your own unit and will be helpful for all.

I know this response work is more difficult online than it is in person, but I 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 within the Unit Drafts discussion. Go ahead and do that after I give you the go ahead, and please respond to each other’s ideas. As many fresh looks as you can have at your understandings, the better off you will 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 do not, now is the time to start! **Take a look at the brief PowerPoint titled Essential 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 I shared with you in the PowerPoint. It is tempting to just grab your first thoughts for essential questions, but I ask that you persevere and stretch your thinking. Experience has taught me 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, I would 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, I would like you to take a look at a proposed unit design. Find the document in Resources titled *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? I 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 __________. I have posted a worksheet to help you with this. You will find in the Resources section both a sample worksheet, filled in, and a blank sheet titled *Generating Assessment Ideas*. 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, I 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 after I have seen them and made comments. 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. **Continue and complete technology criteria.** One last item this week! Whew—this became a long list. Each group should complete their list for the criteria for good use of technology in Caucus. I will combine the five lists next week and we will see if we can come to consensus.

And while I am talking about criteria…if you have not, 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  Oct. 11 to 17

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 I give you. Also, please read all directions for this week carefully. If you have never done this kind of design work, I think you will find it exciting, although I also guarantee a certain amount of frustration. I heartily believe the frustration is a small price to pay for the results. I 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 are the big ideas of my targeted content?*
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. We will be spending a lot of time in the first stage as it is the most critical.

When you think you have a draft of your targeted standards and enduring understandings, e-mail them to me. I will respond to your ideas and, after working with you, will ask you to post them on Caucus over the next couple of weeks.

Before you jump into this work, I 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. Remember, when you begin typing out your unit, do it in the template. It is the template with your unit information typed in that you will attach to me in our many email exchanges throughout the next several weeks.

2. **Review at least four of the templates** completed and posted at the sites for these units (they are all in the webliography and bibliography):

   Planning and Mapping a School Garden
   Alaska
   Earth History
Family History Unit
Forces That Shape The Earth
Living in an Eagle's Habitat.
Media Literacy
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 how to create your own.

3. **Review the PowerPoint slideshow in the Resources section titled Enduring Understandings.**

This is designed to review what you have 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 me. I will put it in the PowerPoint format, as opposed to the slideshow format, because Caucus seems to like that better. This is review information that can come in handy when you begin struggling with your own unit ideas so don’t worry if you don’t have access to PowerPoint.

Now that you have done those tasks, you are 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. Three 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 I 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. If you are in say...Dalat or somewhere a wee bit away from Alaska, let me know what standards you will use.

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 all want to see the whole thing! Also, include the key elements on which you would like to focus. Here is an example of one standard and the level of detail you need to provide in your unit template:

**Technology Standard A:** A student should be able to operate technology-based tools.

1. A student should use a computer to enter and retrieve information

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 are 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, I have 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. I have 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.** I have posted a link to an article called *From Trivial Pursuits to Essential Questions* that should be helpful as you get started: [http://www.fno.org/feb01/pl.html](http://www.fno.org/feb01/pl.html)

Next week I 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 to the Heidi Hayes Jacobs book, *Curriculum Mapping*, you will find a nice section there on essential questions. More next week, though!
8. **Remember, once I okay your standards and understandings, post them on Caucus.**

   It may take a couple of weeks of back-and-forth e-mails with me before the beginning part of your design template will be Caucus-ready. Also, if you have questions or problems with this work, head to our virtual Coffee Shop. I encourage all of you to help answer questions posted there.

9. **Continue creating criteria for good use of technology in Caucus.**

**Looking ahead...**

   More hard thinking on putting the beginning of your unit together. We will read and discuss chapters 5 & 6 of *Understanding by Design*.  

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**Week 5  Sept. 4 to Sept. 10**

This week we will explore the following questions:
How do you use the Internet productively with students?
How can we teach students to look under the hood?
How can we address appropriate technology use?

We will also continue looking at the question:
How does technology impact and support learning?

I am going to slow down the pace just a tad this week in light of all the wonderful but germy children we work with. That will give everyone a little breathing room to be sure they have made a couple of entries for each Caucus discussion and are caught up with their work.

So breathe slowly and take a look at this week’s assignments:

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 are looking at these units and ideas through the filter of teaching for understanding.

3. *Reviewing tools to help students look under the hood.* I 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? I have some sites for you to look at and determine whether you think they are valid sites. I also have some sites that offer tools for you to use with students in the evaluation of Internet sites. I 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-Uss*

*DHMO.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

4. **Read the article, Digital Citizenship.**

5. **Read the article, Online Digital Archives.** You will then address some or all of your reading from this week’s two articles and last week’s article, Using Technology to Dig For Meaning by answering the following questions: How can I address appropriate technology use? How could I use some of these teaching methods, strategies and ideas in my classroom to support learning? Also, share any initial thoughts you might have about how you may wish to use technology in your unit design for this course.

**Coming up:** 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 and six.

**Week 4  Sept. 27 to Oct. 3**

*I have begun an assignment archive in the Resources section. I will keep links to the current and last week’s assignments. All previous week’s assignments can be found in the archive. If my weekly assignments differ from the timeline, go with what is in the weekly assignments.*

Many of you are sharing in Caucus that you have experience and prior training using backwards design. I can strongly recommend an additional book that would be quite useful for those interested in pursuing additional backwards design work beyond this course. It extends and focuses on the practical application of curriculum design. The book is: *Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook* by McTighe and Wiggins. The ISBN number is 0-87120-855-5. It just came out this year from ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). If you are a member, you can get a discount.
This week we have two questions to consider:

**What does it mean to understand?**

**How does technology impact and support learning?**

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, I will ask you to share your thoughts and identify some understandings you wish students to leave with in your subject area (select one content area if you teach multiple subjects). 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 am 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, I 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 a writing piece that explains how your representation reflects understanding. This activity is designed to help you answer the question, “What does it mean to understand?” E-mail a completed drawing and writing as an attachment to me. Be sure your name is on the title of the document. Do not forget about the design principles!

I have put a couple examples of at least the graphic part of this assignment in the Resources section to give you an idea of how this could be done. There are many, many ways of approaching this. Remember to include your reflection as well as your graphic in your attachment to me by the end of the week.

3. **Check out the webliography and bibliography to 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. I have provided links to several units that were designed using this process. The authors are all Alaska teachers who participated in the Alaska Reform in the
Classroom Through Technology Integration and Collaboration (ARCTIC) program. If you would like to learn more about ARCTIC, you can visit that website. You will find the ARCTIC unit links in the webliography and bibliography.

Also do some searching on your own, using the other links 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. We will share and discuss the results of your search next week. 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. **Read the article, *Using Technology to Dig for Meaning***. Discuss how technology impacts and supports good learning. You may use the models discussed in the article or the article may spur you to share similar ideas developed by you or your colleagues.

5. **Complete the software inventory.** Use the Software Inventory form posted in the Resources section to help you inventory all of the software available to you and your students. This may be difficult for some of you because of the summer season. Do the best you can with the information that is available. 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.

I have also posted another article about software evaluation that provides for a much deeper look at software. I am 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 is titled Evaluation Criteria.

**Looking ahead:**
We will look at some credible and some incredible websites.
**Week 3: Sept. 20 to Sept. 26**

Most of you made it to Caucus! If you have not, ask if you need help. It is great to see most of your introductions up. Please try to post a picture if you have not already done so.

Last week I posted the results of the Week 1 online survey. Many of you could not access it. I have put it up again. If you cannot access it, it may be that you are not logging on each time with your username and password. It is important that you do that each time you look at the course site. You should also get used to clicking on the appropriate section number for the course. Each section sees the same things on the course site, but some things like class evaluations are managed by section. If you still cannot access the survey results, contact the HelpDesk so they can help figure out the problem. In case you didn’t know, the HelpDesk is VERY helpful. It is the place to direct any of your online problems.

This week I will have several activities going at once as we try to bring together numerous threads. The Berger dialogue will continue throughout this week as people have time to read and ponder his words. I am glad many of you seemed to enjoy this book. I find his passion and his vision extraordinary and inspiring.
Having taught in programs with many of the attributes Berger describes, I know this is a possibility and not just a fantasy. I hope you can see that while curriculum in his eyes is not the most important piece in achieving excellence, it has a tremendous impact on quality. His project designs are authentic, his curriculum deals with the real world and his technology use is authentic.

With that in mind, I would like you to start looking at several things this week as we explore the following questions: How can the principles of design impact student work? What is backward design? How can we teach for meaning in an age of mandates and standardized tests?

It is important to complete the work in order. If you have not already completed work from last week do so before going on to the work for this week. I intend for the discussions and ideas to build on one another.

1. **Begin The Non-Designer’s Design Book discussion in Caucus.** Discussion question: How can the principles of design impact student work, and how does this connect to the idea of an ethic of excellence?

2. **Read and discuss Understanding by Design, introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.** Please do not 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 stand out for you. They might be ideas that are new and exciting to you, or confusing, or troublesome or just interesting. We will 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? I 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?

Discuss your thoughts and ideas about the reading in Caucus with your group.

After you have had a chance to start processing all of this, I 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!
3. **Read and discuss the Educational Leadership article, “You Can Teach for Meaning”**. Let this question guide your reading and Caucus discussion, “How can we teach for meaning in an age of mandates and standardized tests?” Also think about which idea is most important to you. Discuss these questions in Caucus.

4. **Take a look at Helena Fagan’s interview with Northwest Education in the Resources section**. This interview is short and enjoyable to read. It is a good postlude to the Wiggins and McTighe chapters and article. I was fortunate at one time to team teach with Helena. She is my mentor and friend. She is one sharp cookie!

5. **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.

6. **Turn in your C.R.A.P. document** demonstrating your ability to use the design principles presented by Williams. **This is due by September 26**. If this due date is a problem for you because you have recently received the book or still do not have the book, email me right away with a due date that is more reasonable for you. Remember to email the document, drafts and reflective writing as an attachment to me and to include your name in the document title. Complete directions are posted under last week’s assignments.

You may want to look at Chapter 7 in the Non-Designer’s Design Book, “Extra Tips & Tricks” while working on your
assignment if you have the 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition. There are some neat ideas specific to your project.

Hey, I am glad to know I am not the only one with addictions! This week our \textit{optional} Coffee Shop bonding topic is \textbf{magazines}: the ones for which you have subscriptions, you buy regularly, you wish you had the money to subscribe to or buy, or the ones at which you surreptitiously sneak a peek in the grocery aisle.

\textbf{Preparing for next week:} I will ask you to begin an inventory of all the software available to you and your students. Teachers often do not 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 read and discuss Chapters 3 and 4 of \textit{Understanding by Design}. 
Week 2  September 13 to 19

The essential question for this week is: 

**What is an ethic of excellence and how does technology fit into the picture?**

Our two sections are up and running! The sections are linked together since the curriculum is the same. Both sections will have access to the same coursework and discussions. The only issue will be during course evaluations. You will need to be sure to enter your correct course section site to evaluate this course when the time comes....

You may enter last week’s Caucus discussion that, hopefully, you’ve created in a document and can cut and paste into a discussion conference according to your section. As long as you know which section you are in, that should be easy. Just click on the appropriate conference and add your 2 cents. The first week discussions will take up a lot of space as it will be one of the few times your whole class section will respond in one discussion. Beginning with this week’s discussions and for many weeks, you’ll be in smaller groups as outlined below.

I have posted, in the Resources section, a document titled Caucus Discussion Groups. Check this information to discover to which group you have been assigned. It will also denote which section
you are in. 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 you from needing to read a mountain of entries each time. Feel free, however, to read what is going on in the other groups. To ensure the safety of all class participants, please be respectful and careful with your words at all times.

**A Caucus tip:** I 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 links to your documents, but for now it will be easier if you just copy and paste your writing.

**Beginning this week, I 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. My 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.

As we move through this course, I 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.

So here we go with this week’s assignments. Please complete the following assignments no later than **September 19**. Here is the scoop for this week:
1. **Discuss An Ethic of Excellence.** A discussion item has been set up for each group and I would like you to focus your discussion on these questions:

**What is an ethic of excellence, according to Berger?**
**How does curriculum influence this ethic?**
**How does technology fit into the picture?**

For this discussion, I 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 do not 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. **Read The Non-Designer’s Design Book, chapters 1-6.** I hope to start a discussion of this book next week as I am aware that some of you may be late in receiving the books. If you have the design book, you realize that reading chapters 1-6 is not a very time-consuming task.

3. **C.R.AP.** Yes, you read it correctly! If you have 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 I 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 classroom webpage, a résumé, a poster for parent night, a business card, etc. It can even be something for your personal life, such as an invitation or flyer for a retirement party. Chapter 7 has extra tips and tricks that may be useful and specific to your chosen project.

You will probably end up creating at least one or two drafts. I would like to see the progression of your work. I would also like to
have you write a brief reflection of how your final document fulfills the elements of C.R.A.P. by answering the essential question, “How do the principles of design impact your work?” Please email your final document and draft(s) as well as your reflective writing to me as an attachment with your name and the course number and section on the document by September 26. That should give everybody enough time.

4. **Coffee Shop.** Check out the Coffee Shop area in Caucus. Please ask questions there or make general comments you would like to share with the group. I 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. This is an informal area where I will post an optional community-builder question every week until I run out of questions. This first question is a sizzler! Bring your mug, put your feet up and your computer in your lap.

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

**Week 1: Sept. 7 - 12**
The Caucus discussions are an essential part of this course. To do well in this course you will need to read materials carefully, be an active participant in Caucus, do assignments in the order given (especially when you begin designing your unit) and keep up with the timeline. You will also need to grapple with the course concepts and contribute thoughtful ideas and analysis of texts and discussions. I would anticipate your spending at least 6-10 hours on this class weekly. Many students report spending more time completing coursework for this class some weeks.

This first week will give all of us a chance to figure out the ins and outs of the new UAS Online course site and to become familiar with Caucus, the tool we will use for discussion. Here are the tasks to complete by September 12:

1. **Read the Welcome to ED 628 introduction** to this course. You will find it posted in the Resources section below.

2. **Add your name to the class participant list.** Please enter your correct 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. **Explore this site.** Check out the Course Timeline posted in the Resources section. Look at the Assessments and Grading document as well. Take a lingering look at the final unit scoring guide in that link to see where we are headed with our main project for the class. Try the library links, etc. You will find some great resources with more to come!

4. **Join the Caucus conference.** Just click on the conference link on this site. You will need your UAS student id. 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.

6. **Insert a picture of yourself so it shows up on the course participant list.** It is quite easy to upload a picture. Just click on “upload a file” and follow the directions.

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

7. **Read** *An Ethic of Excellence* 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 an ethic of excellence 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.

9. **Go back to Caucus to discuss this week’s questions.** One of our questions this week is, “Who are we, and what is our mission?” After reviewing this site so far, answer the following questions: How is the course “mission” different from your expectations? What are your hopes for this course? What will be your biggest challenge?

A second question is, “How can we create a sense of community online?” A challenge for me as an online instructor is to think of ways to create community. When I think of ways community is created in face-to-face settings – small talk, sharing food, participating in activities together, fostering a sense of safety – they seem difficult to pull-off in an online class. Many of you are probably veteran online course-takers. But whether this if your first or fifteenth online course, please take time to share any ideas you may have for how to create community online.
This will be one of the few times we will have all class members responding in one big Caucus space so please keep your comments brief. **Do** try to respond to others’ comments (see class participation scoring guide) and check in to the discussion at least twice by the end of the week.

10. Complete the ED 628 First Week survey in the Assignments section below.

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

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**Looking ahead:**
We will begin the first 6 chapters of Williams’ *Non-Designer’s Design* book. It’s a light and lively read.