Week 3: Sept. 11 - 17

Most of you have made it to Discussion Board! It is great to see most of your introductions up. Please try to post a picture if you have not already done so.

I realize many of you have just received your books and some still haven’t received all of theirs. The discussion forums may begin a certain week, but may continue for several weeks. So, go ahead and jump in as your books arrive and you get time to read and respond. The Berger dialogue will continue this week as people have had time to read and ponder his words. 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. It’s interesting that a couple of you have had some interactions or almost interactions with Ron Berger in the flesh. That’s a first!

With that in mind, I would like you to start looking at several things this week as we explore the following question:

**What is backward design?**

Every week 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 the upcoming week. I intend for the discussions and ideas to build on one another.

1. **Discuss The Non-Designer’s Design Book, chapters 1-6.**
   The discussion question is: How can the principles of design impact student work, and how does this connect to the idea of an ethic of excellence?
2. **Read **[**Understanding by Design** (UBD), introduction and Chapter 1](#). Please do not skip the introduction. This text can challenge some of the ways you design curriculum, 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 Discussion Board next week along those lines.

Make sure you have a firm understanding of the differences between **activity-focused teaching, coverage-focused teaching, and understanding-focused 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? You will 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. Be prepared to 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?

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

In chapter 1, the authors share a couple of different templates for understanding by design. We will use a modified version of these. Our unit template is located in the Resources section. I will post two different types of formats - .doc and .dot. Some people have better luck using one over another. It is worth taking a look at the templates in the book, though, to get a good idea of the important pieces that will go into the unit design. The main difference is that
we will not be creating as detailed a learning plan in Stage 3 as you see in your text.

After you have had a chance to start processing all of this, I will share some strong unit examples designed by teachers using our course template 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. **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 initial Wiggins and McTighe reading. I was fortunate at one time to team teach with Helena. She is my mentor, friend, and the person who initially designed this course. She is one sharp cookie!

4. **Turn in your C.R.A.P. documents** demonstrating your ability to use the design principles presented by Williams including your drafts and a short description of how you used the design principles.  . **This is due by September 17.** 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. I’ve decided it’s easier for me to receive your assignments via email rather than through the New Task button on the website. 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 2nd edition. There are some neat ideas specific to your project.

**A Summary Assignment List for the Week:**
- Discuss *The Non-Designer’s Design Book* in Discussion Board
• Read Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Understanding by Design*
• Read Helena Fagan interview
• Complete and turn in Design Principles (C.R.A.P.) assignment including design drafts and reflective writing via email to me by **September 17**.

Hey, I am glad to know I am not the only one with addictions! This week our *optional* Coffee Shop bonding topic is **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.

**Preparing for next week**
You will discuss the Introduction and Chapter 1 and you will read Chapter 2 & 4 of *Understanding by Design*. 