Welcome to List Week!

I have not yet received any 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 many of 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 are the next steps:

**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 units in the webliography and bibliography 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 have already given this some thought.

What resources will you need to teach the knowledge and skills on your Know and Do lists?

**Review Criteria.** One last item this week. I have gleaned the criteria for effective use of technology that you posted and agreed to in your response groups. Below is the collection. I tried to combine the ideas from the two groups into a list that could be used as criteria to review a unit. My sense is that the list needs some work. Review the list and then, in Caucus, add your voice to which of these you CANNOT live with and why. Change the wording, separate or combine criteria, or clarify the criteria by the end of the week. 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:

1. Technology provides opportunities for authentic problem solving or creative endeavors.
2. Technology is used to exchange ideas in which to problem solve or research in order to understand.
3. Technology is used in authentic projects and activities to further student understanding.
4. Technology should be integral to learning, not a doo-dad.
5. Technology used should be dependable.
6. Technology should be used for data collection.
7. Technology should be used for analyzing.

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.

Please make sure you are using the unit template in the Resources section. E-mail your updated unit work to me. I have also created an area in Caucus where you should post your revised unit work to share with others. Be sure to pose at least one question. What areas are you unsure about? What kind of feedback are you looking for? How can we help?

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.**!
4. **Add your voice to finalize the criteria for effective use of technology in Caucus**
**Light Housekeeping:** I have posted the final Civil War unit for the Checking for Validity exercise. I have also cleared out Coffee Shop so it will not take so long to access. This week’s optional topic is: Your favorite Spring thing to do.

**Next Week:** I 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.

I know this work can feel tedious at the beginning stages, but I want you to know that I am pleased with the thinking I am seeing as people are moving through the backwards-design work. You are getting there!

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**Week 9 !!!!! !March 15 to March 21**

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 by the end of the week, 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 with the goal of posting your work in Caucus so you can get feedback from everyone. You will want as many brains helping you as possible! Please note that from now on there will not be Group A and B. We will respond to each other as one big group.
Remember to use the unit template located in the Resources section. Just start typing in it, save it, and attach it when you e-mail me so I can provide some direction and you will not have to re-type it. Also remember to use one to three standards and be sure one is a technology standard. You will be assessing each standard in your culminating task so you do not want to focus on too many standards. You may “cover” more content standards but decide upon which specific ones will be your primary focus.

**Housekeeping:** I will post the final Civil War unit for the Checking for Validity exercise at the end of the week as more people complete it. Be sure to make any final response in Caucus for Creating Criteria for Good Technology use by the end of the week as I would like to create a final list from both groups. Hopefully, someone will post a topic for Coffee Shop this week!

This week our question is:

**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. It also provides a list of resources for help with scoring guide creation…a helpful piece for assessment in general, actually.

**Kathy Schrock:**
If you have not 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 PublicSchools:**
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.** 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. Do not 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.

**Week 8 !March 1 - March 14 !**

Time is sure flying along! Here we are at just about the halfway point. Your work will not be considered late until March 15 so you may spend spring break working on this course if you so choose.

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**, then email me 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.

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?**

Once people begin posting their units in Caucus, I would like us all to begin responding to each other’s units. 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…*

I anticipate seeing your unit and giving you feedback many times before it will be posted. Please use the unit template posted in Resources.
1. Some of you may soon be ready to **post your standards and enduring understandings on Caucus.** Go ahead and do that after you clear them through me, 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 may 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 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 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 does not work and why? What are the weaknesses and strengths of this proposed unit? I will share a revised version of the unit later.

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 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, 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?
   - 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 give you the go-ahead. 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.

If you have not already done so, 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.

Oh yes, this week our optional coffee shop topic is: best place to spend spring break.
Have a great spring break everyone!

**Week 7 February 23 - 29**

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’ve 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 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 me. I will respond to your ideas and, after working with you, will ask you to post them on Caucus.

*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. It seems to work fairly well for folks, but at the end, I 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 or bibliography):

   - 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
   - Microbes
   - Media Literacy
   - Klondike

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 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 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 I 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. I and/or other students will answer questions posted there. I encourage you to help each other. Gayle and Cheryl have been doing a great job of helping out with technical questions!

9. **Take a look at Maryellen’s final unit linked in the resources section.** Her final enduring understanding would be a result of her students being able to understand and do her targeted standards. Her first draft enduring understandings (the first of many) were not broad enough nor were they very clear.

   A word of caution: it is much more difficult to begin with a unit you’ve already done and would like to revise. I strongly recommend you choose some standards with which you have never completed a unit. You will remain more open-minded and will not keep getting hung up on favorite activities or lessons that may not be appropriate for what you are after.
This week we will be looking at two 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, read *Making Tech Connect* in the Resources section, and go to the next Caucus item. 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. This may take several responses from each of you depending on how much agreement there is within
your group. 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-Us**
- **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. Evidence of Understanding assignment due by February 22. Please be sure to have a link to your finished product in Caucus before next Monday.

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 and six.

Week 5 ! February 9 to 15
I am glad many of you are getting caught up. I would still like for everyone to work toward give-and-take dialogue in Caucus. It is O.K. and, in fact, encouraged for you to question each of our thinking and/or draw out ideas where we all might benefit from further exploration. Of course we all need to trust and take care of each other in this process. This will be especially critical when we begin commenting on each other’s units. This week you will get some practice making useful comments on a first draft of a unit.

I have appreciated the thoughtfulness of many of your responses and your willingness to relate it back to your classroom practice or classroom practice you have observed.

This week there are 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 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. **Collect evidence of understanding from a classroom and post it in Caucus.** Using what you have learned from your Understanding by Design reading this week, use your own classroom or another
classroom to find evidence of student understanding. Collect that evidence with a digital camera, a video camera, a tape or digital recorder, a scanner or a series of drawings. The evidence of understanding may come from a portfolio, a project, an interview, a writing folder, a series of pieces of art, or a website. It will be easier to find evidence if you examine a portfolio, project, or unit that is somewhat complex and has been completed over a period of time. You may want to use PowerPoint or an AppleWorks slideshow but use whatever technology works for you.

My objective for this assignment is for you to be able to apply your understanding of what we have been reading about understanding. You may wish to focus on one facet of understanding from one unit or you may want to focus on several different facets from many different units or projects. Your evidence may not fit neatly into the facets at all. You may find understanding that is more along the lines of what Berger describes. Understanding is messy. Even Gardner had difficulty with his university students (see link in Resources)!

If you are having difficulty finding much real understanding, you may show or write about what you would hope to find or how you would structure part of the teaching differently to help facilitate understanding. If you have spent some time in a school and wish to share student understanding in a different way, propose a different assignment that still fulfills my objective. Be sure to e-mail me first with your proposal before February 22.

You will have two weeks to complete and post this assignment as a link. I am not looking for an extraordinary multi-media production, but simply a collection of
evidence with some commentary or writing from you explaining how this evidence demonstrates understanding by the student. Please keep your Evidence of Understanding assignment short and sweet: ten images or fewer or under three minutes. Use a method of collection with which you feel comfortable. If you do not have access to a digital camera or scanner, you may use a draw program to draw a series of images that will give us a visual idea of your evidence. Use clipart to depict your evidence. I will put up an example of some evidence of understanding in Caucus later this week. This is an example. There are at least a hundred different ways to approach this. Please let me know this week if you need any help with this assignment.

**Here are the instructions for posting your work as a link:** Get into Caucus and click on Evidence of Understanding. Enter your name and whatever you wish to call your assignment into the text box. Click on upload file. Click browse to upload your file (be sure it has .ppt if it is a PowerPoint or .doc at the end if it is a document you Mac folks). Click on a link named: and name your link. Click upload. It will take awhile.

3. **Look at the units in the webliography and bibliography and 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 using the Internet Workshop form. I 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. There are also three units created by ARCTIC teachers in the bibliography. 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, you may want them to 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 (ex. What are the best strategies for using a search engine?); content (ex. Has anyone found a unit about plants in Alaska?); and critical analysis (ex. 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. **Respond in Caucus to a first draft of a sixth grade unit located in the Resources section.**

I have placed an initial draft of a unit by a student, Maryellen, from last semester (yes, she gave me permission). My purpose for doing this is to help you begin to see what enduring understanding(s) are and how your enduring understanding(s) must be a reflection of your selected content standards. I also want you to think about how technology can be included in a unit as a tool for addressing your enduring understanding(s) and content standards. Lastly, I want you to experience the helpfulness and sometimes difficulty of making appropriate responses to the person behind the unit. Next week I will post her final unit.

**Advice on responding to units:** You will be commenting on later drafts of your fellow students' units. Rather than flat-out telling them what you think of their unit, it will be more helpful if you can use questions that move their thinking. It may be a comment that points out something confusing about their unit or a probing question. Examples are: I don't see how your enduring understanding relates to your science standards. How could you frame your essential unit question so there is no obvious "right" answer?

In Caucus I will have you address the following questions:
What questions or comments would you write to Maryellen regarding her enduring understandings and whether or not her enduring understandings align with her selected standards? What might be an overarching essential question she could pose? What suggestions would you give to her for possible uses of technology with her unit?

5. **Complete the software inventory.** I 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.

**Next week:** We will share and discuss your web search results. We will review some tools to help students evaluate web sites. I will post Maryellen’s final math unit. Your Evidence of Understanding assignment is due February 22.
Week 4    February 2 to 8

We will add to our ongoing Caucus discussions building on each other’s ideas as we attempt to catch up. We continue exploring the following questions:

How can the principles of design impact student work?
What is backward design?
How does technology impact and support a good design?

Additionally, please complete the following:

1. **Complete the software inventory.** I 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.

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
2. **Read the Class Participation Scoring Guide.** If you have not yet read this scoring guide used for caucus discussions, I recommend that you do so immediately. It is posted in the Resources section. I am not expecting formal writing on Caucus, but I am expecting thoughtful, well-developed writing that demonstrates your reading and processing of course materials. I 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. I will also be asking you to self-assess as we move through the course.

**Preparing for next week:** You will read and discuss Chapters 3 and 4 of *Understanding by Design*. You will also complete a web search for exemplary units. Finally, I will introduce an assignment where you will share evidence of understanding.

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**Week 3  January 26 to February 1**
If you have not already done so, please add your e-mail address to the class e-mail list under the blue Communication Toolbox header. It is great to see most of your introductions and photos up.

Hey, I am glad to know I am not the only one with a heinous addiction! 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.

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 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, I would like you to start looking at several things this week as we explore the questions: 

How can principles of design impact student work? What is backward design? How does technology impact and support a good design?

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 a culture of quality?

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 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?

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. **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. I was fortunate at one time to
team teach with Helena. She is my mentor and friend. She is one sharp cookie!

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.

5. **Turn in your C.R.A.P. document** demonstrating your ability to use the design principles presented by Williams. This is due by February 2. Remember to e-mail the document as an attachment to me and to include your name in the document title. Complete directions are posted under last week’s assignments.

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 *Understanding by Design*.

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**Week 2 ! January 19 - 25**

Most of you made it to Caucus! If you haven’t, ask if you need help. Also, please make an effort to post a picture of a reasonable size so we will have
short download times. 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.

**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 attachments, but for now it will be easier if you just copy and paste your writing.

I have posted, in the Resources section, a document titled **Caucus Discussion 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 you from needing to read 11 times 2 entries each time. Feel free, however, to read what is going on in the other group. To ensure the safety of all class participants, please be respectful and careful with your words at all times.

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.

Here is the scoop for this week:

1.!!!!! **Read A Culture of Quality** by Ron Berger. 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?**
2. Discuss A Culture of Quality. A discussion item has been set up for each group and I 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, 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 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.

3. 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 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.

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4. **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 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 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 me as an attachment with your name and the course number on the document by February 2. 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. 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 January 12 - 18

This first week we will start slowly to give all of you a chance to figure out the ins and outs of the course site and to become familiar with Caucus, the tool we will use for discussion. Here are the tasks to complete by the end of the week:

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

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.!!!!! **Explore this site.** Check out the course timeline posted in the Resources section. Look at the assessments and grading. Take a peek at your final unit scoring guide to see where we’re headed with our main project for the class. Try the library links, etc. You will find some great resources, just a click away!

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. I have posted my introduction, 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. !!!! **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.

8. **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 you 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 is 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.

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

Looking ahead:! Begin reading Ron Berger’s, *A Culture of Quality* if you’ve received it. It’s a fast, inspiring read.

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