Understanding by Design

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What is understanding and how does it differ from knowing? What do we want students to understand and be able to do? What enduring knowledge is worth understanding? How will we know that students truly understand and can apply knowledge in a meaningful way? How can we design our courses and units to emphasize understanding and "uncoverage" rather than "coverage"? Understanding by Design explores these questions and provides practical solutions for the teacher-designer.

The book opens by analyzing the logic of backward design as an alternative to coverage and activity-oriented plans. Though backward from habit, this approach brings more focus and coherence to instruction.

Authors Wiggins and McTighe propose a multifaceted approach, with the six "facets" of understanding. The facets combine with backward design to provide a powerful, practical framework for designing curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Beyond its theories, Understanding by Design offers practical design tools, including criteria for selecting "big ideas" worthy of deep understanding, strategies for framing units of study around essential questions, a continuum of assessment methods for determining the degree to which students understand, and the WHERE framework, which enhances student engagement and "rethinking." The book concludes with a unit design template and standards to support quality control at the local level.

Understanding by Design will help educators enhance their understanding of understanding, so that the curriculum and assessments they design truly focus on enhancing the understanding of their students.

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