The "Backward" Curriculum Design Process

from *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins & Jay McTighe (1998)

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

What should students know, understand and be able to do? How do you want students to change as a result of your teaching? What is worth understanding? What enduring understandings are desired?

Given that there typically is more content that can be reasonably be addressed, we are obliged to make choices.

Establishing Curriculum Priorities

- General Knowledge worth being familiar with, but not necssary in life
- Important Knowledge (facts, concepts, principles) and skills (processes, strategies, and methods)
- Enduring Understandings (big ideas and questions) that we want students to retain long after they've forgotten the details.

How does one go about determining what is worth understanding?

- To what extent does the idea, topic or process represent a "big idea" having value beyond the classroom?
- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?
- To what extent does the idea, topic, or process require uncoverage?
- To what extent does the idea, topic or process offer potential for engaging students?

Stage 2: Determine Acceptable Evidence

How will we know if students have achieved the desired understandings? What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

Gathering Evidence of Understanding

Paper-and-Pencil Tests	Written Reports and Papers
Portfolios	Teacher Observations
Prompts (Tell me about. . .)	Projects and Open-Ended Problems
Student Inventories	Student Work
Class Discussions	Critiques

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

- What learning experiences and instruction will evoke and develop the desired understandings, promote student interest and make "excellent" performance more likely?
- What enabling knowledge (facts, concepts, and principles) and skills (procedures) will students need to perform effectively and achieve the desired results?
- What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills?
- What will need to be taught and coached, and how should it best be taught, in light of your expectations?
- What materials and resources are best suited to accomplished these goals?
- How should the learning experiences and instruction be organized and arranged?
- Is the overall design coherent and effective?