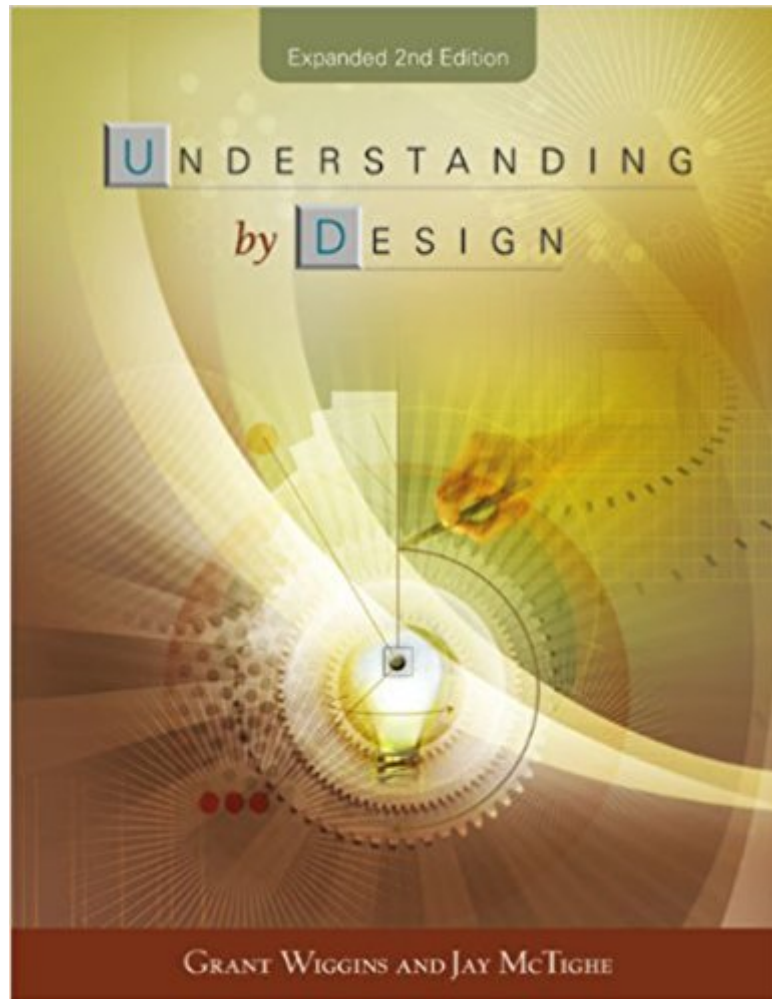


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Understanding By Design, Expanded 2nd Edition



Synopsis

What is understanding and how does it differ from knowledge? How can we determine the big ideas worth understanding? Why is understanding an important teaching goal, and how do we know when students have attained it? How can we create a rigorous and engaging curriculum that focuses on understanding and leads to improved student performance in today's high-stakes, standards-based environment? Authors Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe answer these and many other questions in this second edition of *Understanding by Design*. Drawing on feedback from thousands of educators around the world who have used the UbD framework since its introduction in 1998, the authors have greatly revised and expanded their original work to guide educators across the K-16 spectrum in the design of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. With an improved UbD Template at its core, the book explains the rationale of backward design and explores in greater depth the meaning of such key ideas as essential questions and transfer tasks. Readers will learn why the familiar coverage- and activity-based approaches to curriculum design fall short, and how a focus on the six facets of understanding can enrich student learning. With an expanded array of practical strategies, tools, and examples from all subject areas, the book demonstrates how the research-based principles of *Understanding by Design* apply to district frameworks as well as to individual units of curriculum. Combining provocative ideas, thoughtful analysis, and tested approaches, this new edition of *Understanding by Design* offers teacher-designers a clear path to the creation of curriculum that ensures better learning and a more stimulating experience for students and teachers alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With respect to some of the previous reviewers, I really don't think they have done justice to this book. I'll completely expose my inner geek and admit that curriculum design is fascinating to me, and add that I own a considerable number of books on the topic. I am particularly interested in differentiating curricula, and I purchase books about educational theory and classroom ideas the way other women purchase shoes--insatiably. I have constantly challenged myself to create personalized lessons with meaningful learning goals throughout my teaching career, but I will say that this book has definitely changed the way I view teaching and curricular design--and for the better. I liked this book because it embraces the numerous messy variables that exist in the real world of teaching, and provides a template for you to construct meaningful, integrated learning activities for students. These messy variables include differing student interests and abilities, the struggle to keep activities engaging as well as applicable to important premises of a given discipline, as well as logistical restraints, such as time and access to resources. Other models provide neat flow charts that look beautiful, but often prove unusable given a unique teaching situation (and who doesn't have a unique teaching situation?) This philosophy expects messy variability, and gives a vision and a plan to work with that, instead of hoping everything will turn out neatly. Here are some of the huge ideas I got from this book. First, it is essential to clarify the "so what?" of whatever you are teaching--the big ideas, the principles of the field, the "It" things you want students to come away with.

Whether the human mind is capable of understanding the process of understanding is a philosophical conundrum that has occupied the time of great thinkers from the pre-Socratics to the modern-day exponents of the theory of the mind. It is against this background that McTighe and Wiggins, respected American education researchers and theorists, attempt to say important things about understanding to teachers hoping to improve their lessons and their lesson planning. Their book sets out to do this largely by attempting to clarify some pragmatic trivia in a well ploughed field. Unfortunately, the reader is soon furnished with ample evidence that McTighe and Wiggins are

patently out of their depth in this field. Their definition of understanding is an extremely poor one - "that a student has something more than just textbook knowledge and skill - that a student really 'gets it.' " - although, to be fair, their definitions of assessment and curriculum are much sharper and better considered, and remain useful even outside the context of this book. What the two researchers can achieve is the definition of a series of facets that they themselves create - the Six Facets of Understanding. One is immediately reminded of Bloom's taxonomy here, but McTighe and Wiggins claim that their research supports the notion that this rubric is valuable for teachers seeking to deepen the understanding of students in their classes. Typically, for this type of book it is the anecdotal evidence they cite which remains in the mind. There is a tradition of made up anecdotal evidence being perfectly acceptable in American education research - as long as it describes patterns of behaviour that are empirically evident in schools.

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