

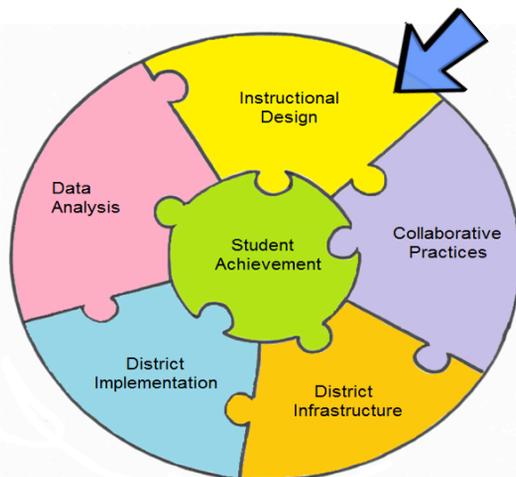
Critical Question #2

How do we teach effectively to ensure students are learning? (DO)

How does the work of leaders support an effective educational system?

Fundamental Practice 2. Lessons and units are developed using a backwards design process, i.e., beginning with the end in mind (big ideas, grade-level expectations, and indicators of student mastery) along with planned methods to assess mastery.

Instruction needs to be intentionally designed for students to learn and perform at a mastery level. Consequently, before planning lessons, teachers must be clear on (1) the concept or skill they expect students to master, (2) what mastery looks or sounds like through an assessment, rubric, exemplar, assignment, scoring guide, etc., and (3) the intentional steps that build a student's understanding from his/her current level of knowledge or understanding to mastery. To support students reaching mastery, teachers design learning activities and assignments with outcome descriptions, rubrics, checklists, scoring guides, assessments, etc., so teachers and students alike know the performance expectation. With outcomes and performance expectations clarified by teachers and with students, instruction can then be purposefully planned and delivered (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, 2011; Jackson, 2011).

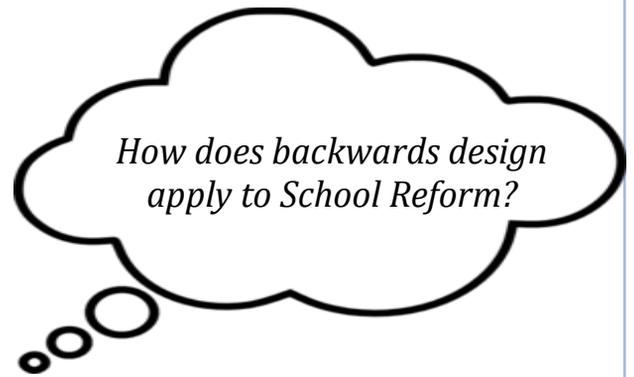
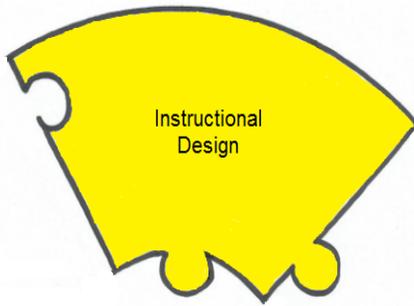


Guiding Questions:

- When planning, are teachers identifying the concepts or skills students are expected to learn before they plan a unit or lesson?
- How are teachers planning lessons which include a method for students to perform or demonstrate mastery?
- How do students know, at the beginning of a lesson or unit, how they are expected to perform to reach a mastery level at the end of the lesson or unit?
- How are teachers planning the smaller conceptual steps that build a student's understanding from their current level to the desired level of mastery?

Reflections:

1. As a leader, what is my role in ensuring this fundamental practice is taking place in my district and schools?
2. What are current barriers that are getting in the way of successfully implementing this fundamental practice systemically in my district and schools?
3. When I return to my district/school, I will complete the following three action steps to begin enhancing our (my and my staff's) application of this fundamental practice:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

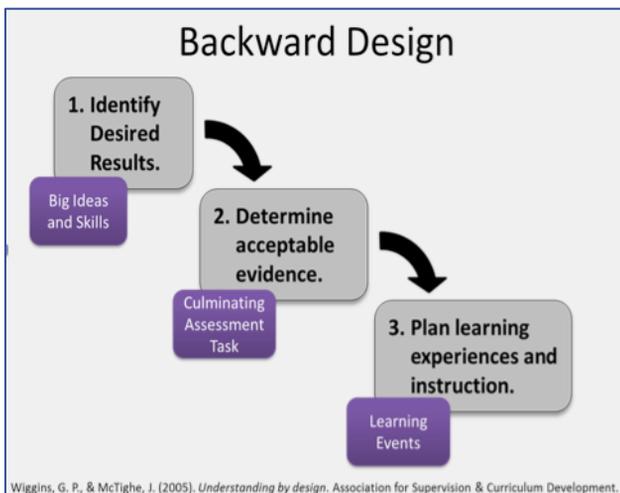


In Chapter 8 of *Schooling by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe (2007) discuss how the same stages of Backwards Design (UbD) hold true in relation to School Reform:

Stage 1. Identify desired results. In Stage 1, change agents establish the aim of a particular reform, in terms of long-term mission and program goals. They identify more specific short-term goals and objectives related to the long-term aims. They ask the following questions: What do we want staff to understand, to really “own”? What essential questions do staff members have to confront, and work through, if the goal is to be achieved? What new knowledge and skills are required to effectively enact the desired reforms?

Stage 2. Determine acceptable evidence. In Stage 2, reformers are reminded to first “think like assessors” before designing specific action plans. The backward-design orientation suggests that we think carefully about the evidence we need to show that we have achieved the desired results. This approach departs from the common practice of thinking about assessment and evaluation as something we do at the end, once our action planning is completed. Rather than creating an evaluation plan near the conclusion, backward design calls for us to develop a feedback plan right from the start based around the evidence and indicators related to our goals. This is vital because we need to plan to make intelligent adjustments all along the way to achieve our goals. Only with clear and appropriate evidence in mind can we gauge our progress and know when we need to modify our actions. Waiting until the end to “see how (or if) it worked” is simply too late, as any effective coach or sponsor of extracurricular activities will attest. Thus reformers need to ask the assessor's questions: How will we know if we have achieved the desired results? What will we see if we are successful? What will we accept as evidence of staff understanding and proficiency? What data do we need from the start to set a baseline in relationship to our goals—to measure the gap between goal and reality? How will we track our progress along the way? By what feedback system will we make timely adjustments to our plans to achieve our goals? These questions and their answers are key not only for making wise plans, but also for clarifying our understanding of the goals and learning principles.

Stage 3. Plan actions to achieve goals. With clearly identified results and appropriate evidence of our aims in mind, it is now the time to plan for action. Several key questions must be considered at this stage of backward design: What professional development activities and support will equip staff with the needed knowledge and skills to perform effectively and achieve desired results? Who is responsible for the various actions? What time schedule will we follow? What resources are needed to accomplish the goals? Is the overall plan coherent? It is important to note that the specifics of planning—choices about tactics and actions, sequence of activities, resources, and so on—should be decided only after we have identified desired results and specific evidence and after we have collected baseline data from which a sensible plan can be derived.



To view this entire article please visit:

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107018/chapters/How-Should-Backward-Design-Apply-to-School-Reform%C2%A2.aspx>

Connect to Resources

For additional resources on this topic, visit the critical question 2, fundamental practice #2 section of the toolkit.