

Backwards Design - “Begin with the End in Mind”

Step 1: Engage in Some New Learning

Before applying Backwards Design to plan curriculum for a holiday, engage in some learning about the holiday, even if you are already familiar with it – seek new understandings.

Step 2: Identify Enduring Understandings

- What do you want children and families to understand and take away regarding this holiday? What are the Big Ideas/Leading Ideas?
- Enduring Understandings go beyond isolated facts
- Deciding ahead of time on the focus allows us to be intentional in our work.

Step 3: Develop Essential Questions

- What provocative questions will foster and guide inquiry and understanding?

An Essential Question

- Causes genuine and relevant inquiry into the big ideas and core content
- Provokes deep thought, lively discussion, sustained inquiry, and new understanding as well as more questions
- Stimulates vital, on-going rethinking of big ideas, assumptions
- Sparks meaningful connections with prior learning and personal experiences
- Naturally recurs, creating opportunities for transfer to other situations and subjects

From Grant Wiggins: http://www.authenticeducation.org/ae_bigideas/article.lasso?artid=53

Step 4: Web Possible Learning Experiences

- What learning experiences will enable children to gain understanding of the “big ideas/enduring understandings” of the holiday?
- Break concepts down into their smallest parts and consider ways in which you can develop a series of learning experiences that lay a foundation for, and build to, the big ideas/enduring understandings.
- Integrate developmentally appropriate learning skills and 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication into experiences in authentic ways.

Step 5: Plan Which Experiences You’ll Offer

- Determine the big ideas you’ll focus on and develop your curriculum plan
- Observe and be responsive to the directions children take the learning experiences.

You’ve got to think about the **BIG THINGS** while you are doing the **small things**, so that all the small things go in the right direction.
-Alvin Toffler

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