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 <u>Essential Questions</u>

• 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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