

Understanding By Design

Understanding by Design or UbD is a curricular planning and school reform approach, authored by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe which has been adopted by Indian River. It provides a helpful set of curriculum design tools and design standards, the result of which is a higher standard of achievement on the part of our students. The end goal of UbD is student understanding and the ability to transfer learnings – to enable learners to connect, make meaning of and effectively use discrete knowledge and skills. Evidence of such understanding is revealed through performance – when learners transfer knowledge and skills effectively, in varied, realistic situations, using one or more "facets" (explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess) with minimal prompting. Educators are coaches of understanding (i.e. they design for and support "making meaning" by the learner), not mere providers of content and activity. Planning is best done "backward" from the desired results and the transfer tasks that embody the goals. The three stages of UbD (Goals, Assessments, Learning Activities) must all align for the plan to be valid and potentially effective.

At Indian River, any curricular or instruction initiative is undertaken utilizing the UbD design template. Whether the initiative is a plan of implementation for a task force or the writing of a new curriculum at a particular grade level, the "backward" planning model of UbD is used.

