Backwards Design: Beginning with the end in mind

University of Alberta Libraries Workshop
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Agenda

○ What is “Backwards Design”?  
  ○ Why should I use it?  
  ○ What is the process?

○ Putting the “work” in “workshop”:
  ○ Identifying goals
  ○ Writing clear and specific learning objectives
  ○ Determining acceptable evidence of learning
  ○ Designing effective learning activities
What is Backwards Design?

Think-Pair-Share:

1. **Think** individually for 1 minute (make some notes if you like)

2. **Pair-up** and **share**/discuss your understanding of Backwards Design

3. **Share** with whole group
Jay McTighe explains...

- As you listen to Jay McTighe explain “Backwards Design”, **add** to the definition you discussed with your partner.


- What did you **add** to expand your understanding of “Backwards Design”?
Backwards Design

- A framework for planning
- Prioritizes big ideas and learning goals, not content “coverage.” Makes purpose clear.
- Helps instructors identify what really matters – what are the “big ideas” you want students to know, remember, and be able to do 5 years from now?
- Assessment is foregrounded (not an after-thought)
- Helps instructors design learning experiences that will help students achieve goals
When to use it?

You can use a backward design approach for aligning and designing instruction for:

- One-Shot Lesson/Session
- Series of Related Classes
- Online Library Course
The 3 Steps of Backwards Design:

- Identify desired goals & student learning objectives
- Determine acceptable evidence of student learning
- Design learning activities to support student learning
Step 1: Identify Desired Goals

- Identify desired goals & student learning objectives:
  - What goals does the curriculum (e.g., ACRL framework) identify?
  - What will the students be able to do in terms of knowledge, skills and dispositions as a result of this lesson, unit, or workshop? (objectives)
What’s the difference between a “goal” and an “objective”?

- A **goal** is a broad statement about the desired result for a lesson, unit or workshop:
  - My goal is for my students to be more accepting of diversity.

- An **objective** is a more specific statement that describes student learning:
  - **Students will be able to** compare cultural practices to identify similarities and differences with their own cultures in a community enriches their lives.
  - **Students will be able to** argue how having many cultures in a community enriches their lives.
Objectives must be measurable.

Objectives usually start with an "action verb"; that explicitly describes what students will do. Do not use vague words like “understand” and “know.” These are hard to “see” or measure.

Objectives are a single sentence statement. Start off with: At the end of this course, students will be able to: ..... 

Objectives should focus on what the STUDENT WILL DO, not what the instructor does.

Objectives should focus on different levels of learning.
Goals & Outcomes from the ACRL Framework

GOAL: “Learners who are developing their information literate abilities:
   - give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation” (ACRL, 2015, p. 6)

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to:
   - Explain the importance of giving credit to the original ideas of others
   - Implement/use an appropriate citation style in their writing
Your turn!

- Identify desired goals & student learning outcomes using the ACRL Framework

- TIP: Begin with one goal that is relevant to a recent or upcoming workshop/lesson

- Work in pairs and get ready to share
Bloom’s Taxonomy

create
- Produce new or original work
  - Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

evaluate
- Justify a stand or decision
  - Appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

analyze
- Draw connections among ideas
  - Differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

apply
- Use information in new situations
  - Execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

understand
- Explain ideas or concepts
  - Classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

remember
- Recall facts and basic concepts
  - Define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state
Step 2: Determine Acceptable Evidence of Student Learning

- How will you recognize when students have achieved the learning objective?
  - What will you look for in student work?
    - Formal assignments
    - In-class work

- What evidence will they be able to provide to you?
  - What kind of product will they submit?
  - What specific skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions should be in the product?
Returning to our examples:

- Students will be able to **explain** the importance of giving credit to the original ideas of others.
  - Could student provide reasons for giving credit to the original ideas of others?

- Students will be able to **implement/use** an appropriate citation style in their writing.
  - Did student select the appropriate citation style for their field?
  - Did student use the conventions of the citation style correctly?
Your turn!

- Identify what would be acceptable evidence of learning for your learning objective from Step 1.

- TIP: Try restating your learning objective as a question (or break it into several questions).

- Identify how you will assess it (observation, assignment that students submit, in-class group work, etc.)

- Work in pairs and get ready to share
Step 3: Plan Learning Experiences

- Now that you know what you want students to achieve AND you know what success will look like, it’s time to plan for a successful outcome.

- What teaching and learning strategies are going to help students achieve the goals and objectives you’ve set for them?

- Ensure your learning experiences align with your goals and objectives.
Your turn!

- Identify several teaching/learning experiences that will help students:
  - Achieve the objective you created in Step 1
  - Produce the desired evidence of their learning

- Try to think of a variety of learning experiences that could achieve the same objective (mix things up a bit!)
  - For example, instead of a lecture, what active learning strategies might you use?
Backwards Design: Begin with the end in mind

- Identify desired goals & student learning objectives
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Questions/Comments

Next workshop: More effective “One-shot” sessions
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