

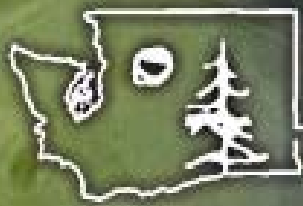
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FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

THE VALUE OF THE METAPHOR OF PLAYING THE WHOLE GAME

What is “understanding”? What is worth understanding in the context of your discipline or field?



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ON OWN ...AND IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHERS

What is “understanding”? What is something you understand well? How did you come to understand it? How do you know you understand it?

On own: Jot down a few notes.

➡ Share insights with nearby colleagues.



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“Understanding is the ability to think and act flexibly with what one knows. To put it another way, an understanding of a topic is a “flexible performance capability” with emphasis on the flexibility. In keeping with this, learning for understanding is like learning a flexible performance—more like learning to improvise jazz or hold a good conversation or rock climb than learning the multiplication table or the dates of the presidents or that $F=MA$. Learning facts can be a crucial backdrop to learning for understanding, but learning facts is not learning for understanding.

~ David Perkins, “What is understanding?” from *Teaching for Understanding: Linking Research with Practice*, Martha Stone Wiske, ed. 1998



“PLAYING THE WHOLE GAME”

Skim the first two pages of “A Whole New Ball Game” to get oriented.

Settle in to read the section called “Approaching complexity” on page 3 (ends on page 7).

Jump to the end and read the section called “Yes, but...” beginning on page 15.

If you like reading slowly, focus on pages 18-20.

When you have finished reading, write some notes to yourself.



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ON OWN ...AND IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHERS

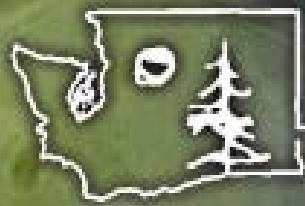
I wonder how I can organize learning around a “whole game.”

I wonder how I can get learners started with a whole game even if they're just beginners.

I wonder how I can keep the game in motion, keep the learners “playing.”

I might pay attention to “pfsst”- pace (learners individually involved most of the time), focus (learners thoughtfully doing what they're supposed to get better at), stretch (optimal challenge), and stick (review, reflection, rehearsal, and stock taking).

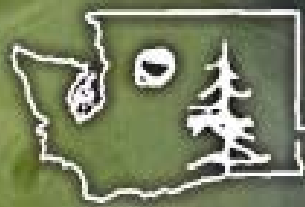
~ David Perkins, *Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education*, 2009



WORK ON THE HARD PARTS

“The hard parts have an annoying characteristic: they do not always get better just through playing the whole game. Real improvement depends on deconstructing the game, singling out the hard parts for special attention, practicing them on the side, developing strategies to deal with them better, and reintegrating them soon into the whole game. Batting practice!”

~ David Perkins, *Making Learning Whole*, 2009



TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What topics are worth understanding in the context of your discipline or field?
- What about these topics need to be understood?
- How can we foster understanding?
- How can we tell what students understand?

“ Central understanding performances”



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DISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING

KNOWLEDGE

What ideas are central for us in our work in this discipline or field of study?

METHODS

What do we do—what methods do we use—as experts in our field?

PURPOSES...

Why do we pursue understanding in the ways we do?

FORMS

How do we share our understandings with others?

~ Veronica Boix Mansilla, "Assessing Student Learning at Disciplinary Crossroads," *Change*, 2004



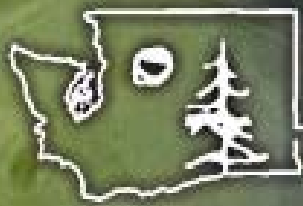
REVISIT & FINE-TUNE ASSIGNMENT DESIGN

- Am I/are we inviting students to “play the whole game”...or in the context of the whole game to focus on a “hard part”?
- Does this assignment invite students to learn “something” that is worth understanding?

Notes on assignment

➡ Connect; extend; challenge

➡ I wonder...



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TOMORROW'S SESSIONS

- ❖ **INTEGRATIVE LEARNING:** What is “integrative learning”? Designing purposeful integrative learning experiences for students
- ❖ **HIGH IMPACT EDUCATION:** What are we aiming for? Connecting research on learning to classroom and curricular practices