

## Enduring Understandings – Rationale and Checklist

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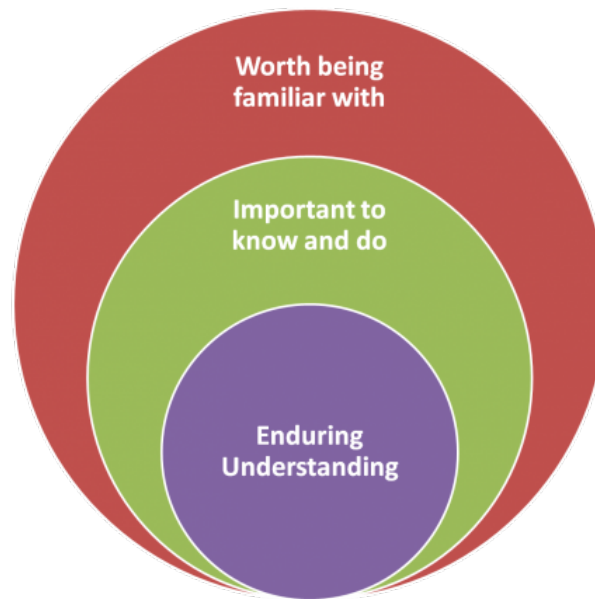


Image from: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/teaching-for-enduring-understanding/35243>

“Enduring understandings” are fundamental “truths” at the core of a discipline. They are the “Ah-Ha’s” that expertise in the field know and that novices must discover to see the value and purpose of the discipline. “Enduring Understandings” are not the “answers” of the fields of study, but the approaches and perspectives that are used that make the fields distinct. They are relational statements of how important concepts within the discipline interact, thus they are often stated in a format such as this: “Big Idea” + relational verb + components. They are not facts, but guiding principles that may seem like facts to those who understand them. Reasons they are so powerful is because Enduring Understandings are the “glue” which both help knowledge and skills stick but also make the learning useful, able to be applied to real life and new situations. When a student uncovers an Enduring Understanding, the learning is not inert and forgettable, but firmly connected to the student’s existing and expanding cognitive schema.

To help filter the “worth being familiar with” from the “important” and “enduring understanding,” Wiggins and McTighe suggest four criteria:

1. “To what extent does the idea, topic, or process represent a ‘big idea’ having enduring value beyond the classroom?”
2. “To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?”
3. “To what extent does the idea, topic, or process require uncoverage?”
4. “To what extent does the idea, topic, or process offer potential for engaging students?”
5. To this I have added the following: “To what extent is the idea, topic or process a core concept or model at the heart of the discipline and comprised of inter-related variables?”

