

The recent trend for lesson formatting in schools is Understanding by Design, or UbD.

This structure for learning includes four main focuses. The first searches for what is being attained by the learning process. The second focus deals with specific education experiences and how they are used to attain the knowledge. The third focus entails the actual learning experiences and how they are effective in instruction. The fourth point of focus questions how learning is evaluated. These four focuses are the roots of lesson plans. Objectives are what is being attained by the students, the sequence includes the learning experiences and how they are used in effective instruction, and the evaluation is the same thing as assessment.

Jennifer Moss (2015) states that UbD “[provides] a “conceptual lens” for prioritizing content” and can aide in “[transferring] to other contexts”. Based on our activity in class, I would agree with this use of UbD. I found that I was able to generalize the concepts of the lesson and find out what the end result would look like. I feel that this is a great way to brainstorm lessons based around 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Since these skills are broader to begin with and not specifically targeted toward music, perhaps thinking backwards in this way would assist the teacher in creating meaningful experiences for students in addition to creating a meaningful music lesson. Moss (2015) also references how UbD would assist in developing online courses. Of the strictly online courses that I have taken, I have had very little interaction with teachers. If some of my instructors had used this format, it may have helped to develop a better course in the end result instead of the emptiness of a non-human learning experience.

Even though UbD seems to be a great tool in generalizing the “big idea” for a unit and building the foundation of a curriculum, I have so far failed to see how it makes any sort of specificity easier in lesson planning. When doing our group activity in class, I acted as scribe for our group. My group members said things that made complete sense, but I had trouble trying to

write down a phrase or sentence that wasn't identical to something else I had already written. I found the lesson plan to be very repetitive and not specific enough to formulate a sequence. However, after reading through Zach Gates' example plan, I realized we had only done a part of the process. Possibly after doing stage three I may have been able to formulate a lesson plan. Zach's was very straight forward and organized, but even the way the plan looks is disorienting to me. I do find that I memorize much of my lesson plan and rarely look at it while teaching. However, if this were the format, I would never be able to find my place during my teaching if I needed to refer to my plan. UbD is very much "a framework for improving student achievement", and it certainly "[emphasizes] the teacher's critical role as designer of student learning" (Authentic Education 2014). However, this leads one to wonder where the gradual release of responsibility can come into play when the teacher is the sole decider in creating the process, presenting, and assessing whether or not the student is an independent learner.

Gradual release of responsibility includes the process of fading. Within the apprenticeships, this concept is most directly linked to a sociotransformative apprenticeship. In this apprenticeship, the teacher facilitates a context relevant conversation, promotes socially and personally relevant activity, and allows the apprentice to take control of the learning, also known as fading (Abrahams & Abrahams 2010). This allows the student to act on their new skill of knowledge independently (Abrahams & Abrahams 2010). The fading in this process is the gradual release of responsibility. During this past January, I had the opportunity to work as a substitute teaching aide for students in the Life Skills and Developmental Disabilities programs at my old middle school. I worked mostly with scripted programs for math and reading. The programs used exactly this kind of process, and ended with independent work for the student. I very often had to remind myself that students needed to actually do this part without my help,

because they needed to learn to take responsibility for their learning experience. Sandra Clark (2014) explains a similar process with ESL students. She described the gradual release of responsibility program in four steps. First, “I do it”, meaning the students experience some of the material independently first. Secondly, “we do it”. The teacher leads an engaging lesson that introduces and explains the material. Third, “you do it together”, meaning that students will work in groups or pairs to help one another while the teacher floats and facilitates as needed. Fourth, “you do it alone”, denoting that students work independently and problem solve on their own. I liked Clark’s outline of the process. This concept seems the most practical and usable of all of the concepts we discussed this week.

## References

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