



*Thinking for
Understanding:
An introduction to the Teaching for
Understanding (TfU) framework*

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A Quotation...



“...[I]f real success is to attend the effort to bring a man [sic] to a definite position, one must first of all take pains to find him where he is and begin there.... For to be a teacher does not mean simply to affirm that such a thing is so, or to deliver a lecture, etc. No, to be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner. Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it....”

- Soren Kierkegaard, *The Journals*, 1854

The Plan

- Analysis of teaching for understanding in action
- Exploration of TfU framework
- “Messing about” with the framework



Understanding Goals

- What does it mean to teach and learn for understanding?
- How does teaching for understanding look/feel in the classroom?
- What are the elements of the TfU framework, and how do they work together to focus learners on understanding?
- How can I continue to develop my understanding of teaching for understanding?



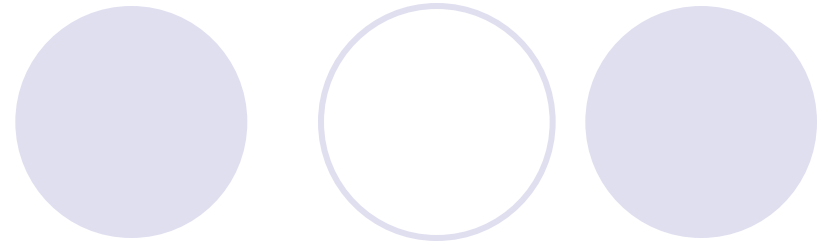


What is understanding?

“The performance view of understanding is consonant with both common sense and a number of sources in contemporary cognitive science. The performance perspective says, in brief, that understanding is a matter of being able to do a variety of thought-provoking things with a topic, such as **explaining, finding evidence and examples, generalizing, applying, analogizing, and representing the topic in new ways.**”

From *The Teaching for Understanding Guide* by Tina Blythe and Associates (Jossey-Bass, 1999)

Another definition:

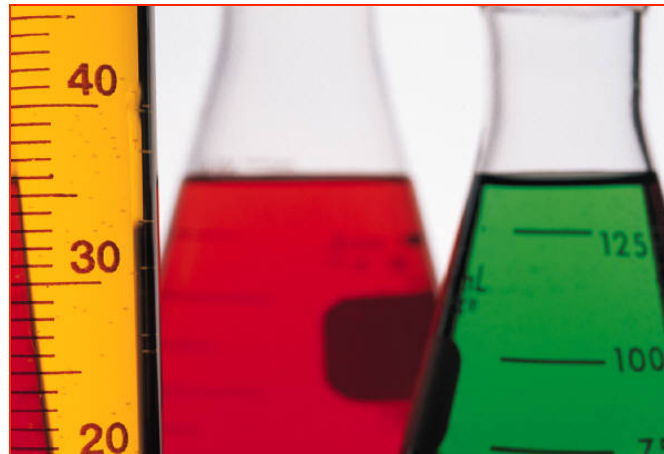
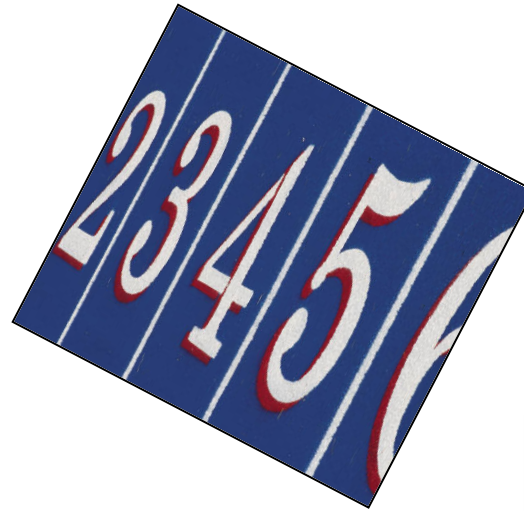


In other words, understanding is being able to use knowledge flexibly in a novel context.



Brainstorming session

What are 2 or 3 understandings you want learners to develop once they have finished their time with you?



Analysis of video clip

- What do you notice about what you've seen/heard?
- What are Carmen Mack and Emily Smith doing in their planning and lessons to foster learning?
- What are important goals have they set for their students?





The Teaching for Understanding framework

Throughlines, or Overarching Understanding Goals (extend through the entire course—focus learners on BIG understandings)



Generative Topic (the content we focus on in our unit; what it is about the topic that motivates us to learn more)



Understanding Goals (extend through a unit; connect to Throughlines and stem from the Generative Topic)



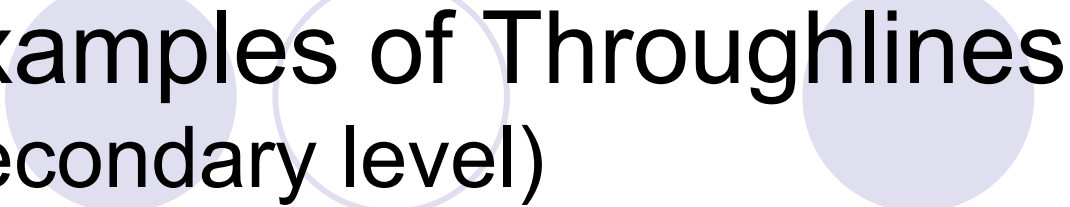
Performances of Understanding (learners demonstrate & develop their understanding of the topic at various points in a unit)



Ongoing Assessment (learners assess themselves and one another, and receive frequent formative feedback from the teacher)


Examples of Throughlines

(secondary level)



- How can we see algebra at work in everyday life? (math)
- How can studying Spanish help me to better understand the world? (world languages)
- How do we know what we know about things long ago? (social studies)
- What do I want to express, and why? (arts)

Examples of Throughlines (primary level)



- How can I use evidence to effectively support my ideas?
- How can I get along with my classmates when working in groups?
- How do I develop good questions for inquiry?
- Why is it important to listen carefully to others?



Your turn

- Take those BIG ideas you noted earlier and turn them into Throughlines—question form is much more student-friendly
- Now, group yourselves in pairs or triads and give feedback

Final thoughts

Visit the Project Zero and WIDE World online PD course websites for further resources:

<http://pz.harvard.edu>

<http://wideworld.pz.harvard.edu>

Check out the *TfU Guide* by Tina Blythe and Associates

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