

Project Bright IDEA Definitions for Unit Design
 Big Ideas adapted from UBD, Wiggins and McTighe

Topic -
Text –
Author -
Published -

Concepts	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organizing idea or mental construct • A broad abstract idea or guiding principal • A design or plan • Can be something imagined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A unifying idea or quality that is distinct and recurring • The subject of discussion or a course of study
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A topic discussed in detail • A topic of general concern • A formal exchange of opinion • An organized public discussion or argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A difficult matter, situation or person • A question that needs to be solved, justified or explained • Demands on the intellect • A test of one’s abilities
Processes	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for something through a series of steps or actions • A series of natural events that produce change • An established procedure aimed at somebody or something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An abstract thought or contemplation • An idea or belief about something arrived at through speculation or conjecture • A body of rules, principles and techniques that apply to a particular subject, but distinct from actual practice
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contradictory or absurd statement, situation or proposition, but at a deeper level, may actually be true • An oxymoron <p>“To lead the people, walk behind them.” ____ Lao-tzu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something believed to be true, without proof—or can be a starting point of a logical proof • An evaluation of a situation or facts from one person’s point of view

A BIG IDEA

Provides a conceptual lens.

A big idea refers to core concepts, principles, theories and processes that should serve as the focal point of the curricula, instruction and assessment. Big ideas reflect expert understanding and anchor the discourse, inquiries, discoveries, and arguments in a field of study. They provide a basis for setting curriculum priorities to focus on the most meaningful content?

Serves as an organizer for connecting important facts, skills and actions.

Big ideas function as the “conceptual Velcro” for a topic of study. They connect discrete knowledge and skills to a larger intellectual frame and provide a bridge for linking specific facts and skills. A focus on these larger ideas helps students to see the purpose and relevance of content.

Transfers to other contexts.

Discrete facts do not transfer. Big ideas are powerful because they embody transferable ideas, applicable to other topics, inquiries, contexts, issues and problems. Because we can never cover all the knowledge on a given topic, a focus on the big ideas help to manage information overload. Big ideas provide the conceptual through-lines that anchor a coherent curriculum.

Manifests itself, in various ways, within disciplines.

Big Ideas are typically revealed through one or more of the following forms: a core concept (adaptation), a focusing theme (man’s inhumanity to man), an ongoing issue or debate (conservative vs. liberal) a puzzling paradox (poverty amidst plenty), an important process (writing process), an authentic problem or persistent challenge (illiteracy or voter apathy), an illuminating theory (Manifest Destiny), an underlying assumption (the markets are rational), or differing perspectives (terrorist vs. freedom fighter).

Requires un-coverage, because it is an abstraction.

A Big Idea is inherently abstract. Its meaning is not always obvious to students and simply covering it (teacher or textbook defining it) will not ensure student understanding. Coverage is unlikely to cause genuine insight; understand must be earned. Thus, the idea must be uncovered – its meaning discovered, constructed or inferred by the learners with the aid of the teacher and well-designed learning experiences.

Big Ideas Manifested

TOPIC

Concepts	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Genre • Friend Sample • Function Scarcity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good triumphs over evil • Man's inhumanity to man • Saving for a rainy day
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature vs. nurture • Liberty vs. license • Majority always rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to maximize power and control in golf or tennis • Maximize shipping volume
Processes	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Scientific Investigation • Decision Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural selection • The Atkins diet • Big Bang Theory
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting for peace • No force acting on a body moving at constant speed • Less is more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art conveys meaning • Terrorist vs. freedom fighter • Capitalism is the best economic system

Big Ideas Manifested

TOPIC

Nutrition

Concepts	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Groups • Overweight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced diet • You are what you eat
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of synthetic vitamins • Safety and effectiveness of various diets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing taste with good nutrition • The lure of fast foods
Processes	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Scientific Inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various diets that promise weight lose • Diet affects longevity
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prevalence of nutrition-related health problems despite all of the available information about healthful eating • A healthy diet for one person may be unhealthy for another • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USDA Food Pyramid defines healthful eating • Vegetarians are healthier than meat eaters

Big Ideas Manifested

TOPIC

Westward Expansion and Pioneer Life

Concepts	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pioneer • Migration • Adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardship forged a nation • The “pioneer” spirit
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress – Settling the land vs. un settling Native Americans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surviving the harsh and dangerous frontier life • A clash of cultures
Processes	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Inquiry (how do we find out what pioneer life was really like? Whose story is it?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans as “noble savages” • Manifest Destiny
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pioneers’ illusions of freedom and prosperity were key to luring people to the West • Indentured servants in “the land of the free” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West as the “land of opportunity”

Big Ideas Manifested

TOPIC

Concepts	Themes
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
Processes	Theories
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives