



*Training for the New Georgia Performance Standards
Day 2: Unpacking Standards for Unit Development*

Participant's Guide

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Use of This Guide	3
Agenda	4
Module Goal	5
Module Objectives	5
A Big Idea.....	6
An Enduring Understanding.....	7
Essential Questions.....	8
GPS and the Backward Design Process.....	9
Skills and Knowledge	10
Unpacking a Standard.....	11
Unpacking Multiple Standards.....	12
Action Plan.....	14
Follow Up Assignment.....	15
Recommended Readings.....	16
Learning Journal.....	16

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Use of This Guide

The module materials, including a Leader's Guide, Participant's Guide, PowerPoint Presentation, and supplementary materials, are available to designated trainers throughout the state of Georgia who have successfully completed a Train-the-Trainer course offered through the Georgia Department of Education.

Agenda

This is a one-day course, with approximately six hours of instructional time.

Introduction 45 minutes

- Gallery Walk
- Overview of the Module
- Review of Day One Content
- Discussion of Day One Follow Up Assignment

Large Group Demonstration 1 hour, 30 minutes

- Identifying Big Ideas
- Transforming Big Ideas into Enduring Understandings
- Developing Essential Questions
- Identifying Skills and Knowledge

Unpacking a Single Standard 1 hour, 30 minutes

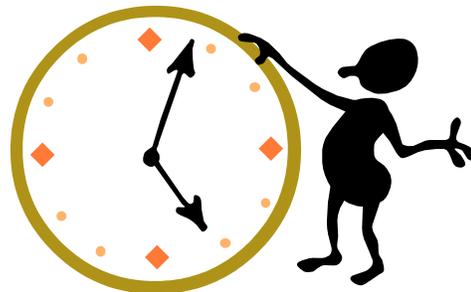
- Small Group Activity
- Large Group Discussion

Unpacking Multiple Standards..... 1 hour, 45 minutes

- Small Group Activity
- Large Group Discussion

Summary and Follow Up Work..... 30 minutes

- Action Planning
- Follow-up Assignment
- Summary



Module Goal

Demonstrate a deep understanding of the new Georgia Performance Standards and the standards-based education approach, through thoughtful curriculum planning, development of formative and summative assessments, and the design of instruction matched to the standards and research-based best practices. This shall be measured by student performance on progress monitoring and standardized criterion-referenced tests.

Key words from the goal:

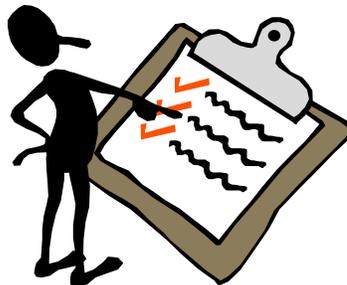
- Deep understanding
- Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)
- Standards-based education
- Research-based best practices

Note that the goal will not be reached by any single day of training. It will take preparation, follow up, and eight days of classroom instruction to master this goal. Various days of training will deal with different components of the goal, such as curriculum planning, assessment, and instruction.

Module Objectives

By the end of day two of training, participants will be able to:

1. Define and describe the rationale for identifying big ideas, enduring understandings, essential questions, and skills and knowledge for a standard.
2. Develop, for a given standard, the big ideas, enduring understandings, essential questions, and skills and knowledge (unpack the standard).
3. Unpack multiple standards to create cohesive units of study.



■ A Big Idea...

...**Provides a “conceptual lens” for organizing content.** 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 on content.

...**Transfers to other contexts.** Discrete facts do not transfer. Big Ideas are powerful because they embody transferable ideas, applicable to other topics, inquiries, context, issues, and problems. Because we can never cover all the knowledge on a given topic, a focus on the Big Ideas helps 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 forums: a core concept (e.g., adaptation), a focusing theme (e.g., man’s inhumanity to man), an ongoing issue or debate (e.g., liberal vs. conservative), a puzzling paradox (e.g., poverty amidst plenty), an important process (e.g., writing process), an authentic problem or persistent challenge (e.g., illiteracy, voter apathy), an illuminating theory (e.g., Manifest Destiny), an underlying assumption (e.g., the markets are rationale), or differing perspectives (e.g., terrorist vs. freedom fighter).

...**Requires uncoverage because it is an abstraction.** A Big Idea is inherently abstract. Its meaning is not always obvious to students, and simply covering it (i.e., the teacher or textbook defining it) will not ensure student understanding. “Coverage” is unlikely to cause genuine insight; understanding 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.

How to identify big ideas: Read the standard thoroughly. Underline the big ideas in the standard. Make additional notes as needed. Note that this is just a stepping stone in the process; once you have turned your Big Ideas into enduring understandings, you do not need to write them down.

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An Enduring Understanding...

...Involves the big ideas that give meaning and importance to facts. Enduring understandings are made up of the concepts, principles, and theories that weave many facts into revealing and useful patterns. They involve the (few) organizing priority ideas that enable us to make sense of past lessons, conduct current inquiry, and create new knowledge.

...Can transfer to other topics, fields, and adult life. Such understandings endure in that they enable us to make vital and informative connections in our learning—as students and as adults. For example, the idea that “might does not make right” applies to both playground disputes and international diplomacy.

...Is usually not obvious, often counter-intuitive, and easily misunderstood. An understanding is an inference, not a fact. It is an insight derived from inquiry. Key understandings in intellectual fields (e.g., in physics: *Objects remain in motion at a constant velocity if no force acts on them*) often violate common sense and conventional wisdom. They are thus often prone to misunderstanding by students. These understandings therefore cannot be covered; they must be uncovered.

...May provide a conceptual foundation for basic skills. The skill-based teaching in mathematics, foreign language, and physical education does not seem to deal with “understanding.” In most units, all skills derive their value from the strategic principles that help us know when and how to use the skill. The understandings also justify the use of skills (e.g., the student who can explain why you should use a bent-arm pull in swimming free style) and enable the student to extend the use of the skill to new situations (e.g., the use of bent-arm pull in back stroke).

...Is deliberately framed as a generalization—the “moral of the story.” An understanding is a generalization derived from inquiry. It is the specific insight that should be inferred from study of the topic (not just the stating of the topic)—what we want the student leaving the study to realize. Note: The enduring understanding of a unit might be that there is no single agreed-upon understanding, or that people disagree about how the issues, facts, or text should be understood.

How to identify enduring understandings: Frame them as full-sentence generalizations starting with “The student will understand that...” Avoid statements that are vague or trite. It may help to think about common misunderstandings about the topic. Enduring understandings may be overarching (beyond the specifics of the unit) or topical.

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Essential Questions...

...Have no simple “right” answer; they are meant to be argued. Essential questions yield inquiry and argument—a variety of plausible responses, not straightforward facts that end the matter. They should *uncover* rather than cover the subject’s puzzles and perspectives. They should result in conclusions drawn by the learner, not recited facts. Like enduring understandings, they may be topical or overarching.

Examples: Does art reflect culture or help shape it? What makes a great story?

...Are designed to provoke and sustain student inquiry, while focusing learning and final performances. Essential questions work best when they are designed and edited to be thought provoking to students, engaging them in sustained, focused inquiries that culminate in important performance. They involve the counterintuitive, the visceral, the whimsical, the controversial.

Examples: Does food that is good for you have to taste bad? Are censorship and democracy compatible?

...Often address the conceptual or philosophical foundations of a discipline. They reflect the most historically important issues, problems, and debates in a field of study.

Examples: What is a proof? Nature or nurture? Can fiction reveal truth?

...Raise other important questions. Essential questions lead to other important questions within, and sometimes across, subject boundaries.

Example: In nature, do only the strong survive? (Leads to questions such as, “What is strength? Are insects strong, since they are survivors?”)

...Naturally and appropriately recur. The same important questions are asked and asked again throughout one’s learning.

Example: What makes a book “great?”

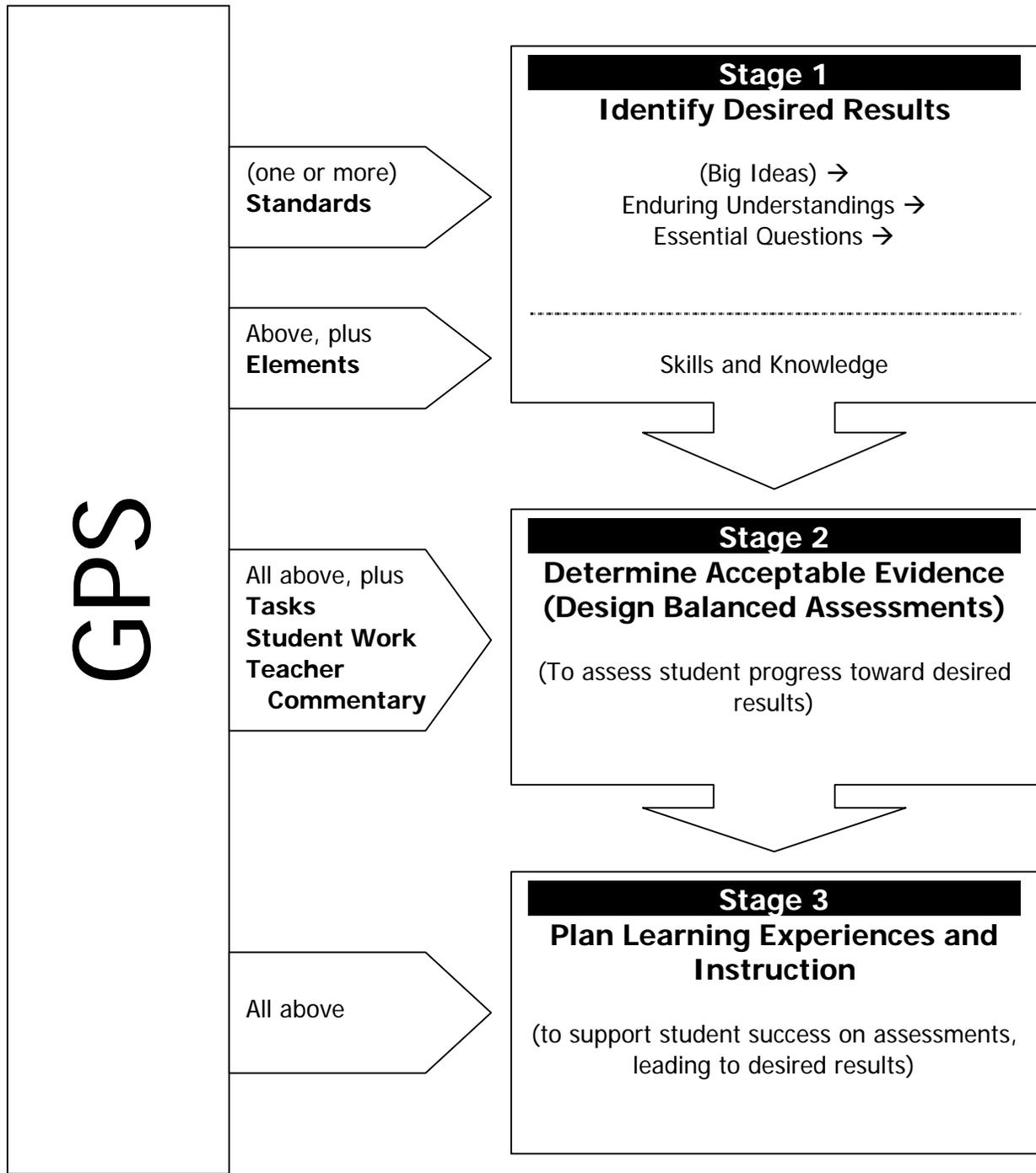
...Stimulate vital, ongoing rethinking of big ideas, assumptions, and prior lessons. They force us to ask deep questions about the nature, origin, and extent of our understanding.

Example: (In light of fractions, place value, irrationals, and negative square roots) what is a number?

How to develop essential questions: Two to five per unit is reasonable. Put them in language appropriate to students. Use them as organizers for the unit, making the “content” answer the questions. Sequence questions so they lead naturally from one to another. Share essential questions with other teachers to ensure curricular coherence.

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GPS and the Unit Design Process



Skills and Knowledge

Knowledge. Getting students to construct meaning, organize information, and (selectively) store information. This includes

- Vocabulary
- Terminology
- Definitions
- Key factual information
- Formulas
- Critical details
- Important events, people
- Sequence and timelines
- Rules
- Laws
- Principles
- Concepts

Skills. Getting students to demonstrate the ability to do something. These may be very simple, discrete operations, or more complex creative ones. This includes

- Actions, procedures, and processes
- Basic skills—decoding, arithmetic computation
- Psychomotor skills—running, swimming a back stroke, playing an instrument
- Study skills
- Communication skills—listening, speaking, writing
- Thinking skills—comparing, inferring, analyzing, interpreting
- Research, inquiry, investigation skills
- Interpersonal/group skills

Verbs to use when stating skills and knowledge. These are samples only:

- Demonstrate
- Derive
- State
- Describe
- List
- Design
- Express
- Induce
- Instruct
- Create
- Critique
- Compare/contrast
- Evaluate
- Illustrate
- Judge
- Make meaning of
- Make sense of
- Use
- Model
- Predict
- Prove
- Show
- Synthesize
- Justify
- Choose
- Imagine
- Assess
- Write
- Draw
- Translate
- Adapt
- Build
- Determine
- Perform
- Solve
- Test

How to develop skills and knowledge statements: Look at the enduring understandings, essential questions, and elements. Ask yourself, “What skills and knowledge do students need in order to reach this goal?” Start each skill/knowledge statement with a verb.

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Unpacking a Standard

Standard (underline big ideas, add as needed)	
Elements	
Enduring understandings	
Essential questions	
Skills and knowledge	

Unpacking Multiple Standards

Standards (underline big ideas, add as needed)	
Elements	
Enduring understandings	
Essential questions	
Skills and knowledge	

Unpacking Multiple Standards

Standards (underline big ideas, add as needed)	
Elements	
Enduring understandings	
Essential questions	
Skills and knowledge	

Action Plan

Directions: Complete the following chart to help shape your team's work between this training session and the next one. Your goal is to complete stage one (unpacking the standards) for all the standards, so that you have a very rough outline of the entire year's units of study. Here are some questions to consider:

- How will we find the time to continue this work?
- How can we build and sustain a high level of enthusiasm and commitment?
- What is our timeline?
- How will we ensure accountability?
- How will we celebrate successes?

Step/Activity	Who	By When	How

Follow Up Assignment

- **Directions: Redeliver Day 2: How to Unpack a Standard**
- **Use the standard you unpacked or choose a different one to unpack.**
- **Make a list of ways to assess a student's understandings of those big ideas, understandings and essential questions.**
- **What evidence is necessary? How good is good enough?**



Learning Journal

