

A MODEL OF LEARNING

What guides teaching and learning practices in your school or classroom? It is helpful to have an instructional model in mind as you respond to this question. Such a model should capture your values and beliefs regarding teaching and learning outcomes.

One particular model that I have found helpful is that of John Hattie, which has grown out of his work with Visible Learning. Jay McTighe has developed a similar model, based on his Understanding by Design framework. Let's examine the basic features of these models and apply them to unit development in general.

The models articulate teaching and learning in terms of three phases: surface learning, deep learning, and transfer of learning. Surface learning focuses on the acquisition and consolidation of declarative knowledge. First comes the building of a knowledge base of content and skills, followed by the ability to store and retrieve new learning through repeated exposure. Deep learning focuses on the acquisition and consolidation of procedural knowledge. First the learner becomes metacognitive about learning and builds a repertoire of learning strategies to connect learning, followed by the automatization of the learning strategies to become more strategic about learning. Finally, transfer of learning focuses on conditional knowledge, applying



learning to new contexts. This is a dynamic process that requires learners to actively choose and evaluate strategies and seek feedback to enhance these adaptive skills.

Another way of capturing the distinction among the three phases is to think of them as thus: surface learning is “knowing that;” deep learning is “knowing how;” and transfer learning is “knowing with.” Applied to teaching and learning in the SWUC, surface learning is associated with gaining proficiency in the NAD content standards; deep learning is fostered by the essential questions and big ideas that give meaning to the content; and transfer is enhanced by the embedding of the 7Cs in our instructional practices.

Here is a link to a [unit design template](#). Click on SWUC Unit Template on the page.