To help filter the whether or not it is an "enduring understanding," Wiggins and McTighe suggest **four criteria:**

1. "To what extent does the idea, topic, or process represent a 'big idea' having enduring value beyond the classroom?"
2. "To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?"
3. "To what extent does the idea, topic, or process require uncoverage?"
4. "To what extent does the idea, topic, or process offer potential for engaging students?"

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| **Standards** | **Possible Essential Understandings** |
| *State Standard 5.5:1* Understand how political, religious, and economic ideas and interests brought about the Revolution (e.g., resistance to imperial policy, the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, taxes on tea, Coercive Acts). | * Students will understand that control for power and desire for independence and economic gain can cause nations to engage in conflict and persecute one another. * Students will understand that differences in political and economic ideals and interests may foster acrimony that result in conflict |
| *State Standard 5.5:3* Understand the people and events associated with the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence and the document's significance, including the key political concepts it embodies, the origins of those concepts, and its role in severing ties with Great Britain. | * Students will understand that framers of political documents incorporate key concepts as an embodiment of ideals and a system of government. * Students will understand that documents can serve as a catalyst for changing people's views on issues. * Students will understand that politicians use preceding government systems and key concepts to create new systems that address the needs and ideals of the current society. * Students will understand that political independence produces risks and rewards. |
| *State Standard 5.5:4* Describe the views, lives, and impact of key individuals during this period (e.g., King George III, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams). | * Students will understand that individuals can make powerful contributions for targeted groups of people that might lead to change, growth, and survival. * Students will understand that effective leaders help unite disparate groups to achieve a unified goal. |

Below are some things to keep in mind when developing essential understandings:

* Essential Understandings begin with the phrase "students will understand that......".
* Essential Understandings (generalizations) are developed from the required standards, and are the most important concepts of the unit of study
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) reflect the most important conceptual understandings that students are to take away from the study.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) enable students to transfer knowledge to a broader context.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) are devoid of level 1 verbs: affect, impact, influence, is, are, have.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) use present tense, active verbs.
* The verbs avoid passive voice ( e.g. "affected by"). Note: if a verb tense is passive voice flip the sentence, putting the end of the sentence at the beginning. This will ensure a present tense, active verb.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) exclude the use of pronouns, proper nouns or topics that would lock the idea in time, place or situation.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) should include at least 2 concepts written in a statement that shows a relationship to one another.
* The Essential Understandings (generalizations) are usually uncovered by the students through essential questions.

Understandings are used to guide curriculum, so it's imperative to be clear about outcomes for a unit prior to teaching. EUs address these questions:

* *What do you want students to really remember long after they have forgotten the discrete facts?*
* *What is your goal for student understanding based on the standards?*
* *What is the essence of this particular unit of study?*
* *How can you help students transfer the knowledge they learn across subjects and grades?*
* *How can you help students make various connections: text-to-self, text-to-world?*

They are written in adult language, so not all students can decipher them. Teachers will teach to the understandings with the goal of students "uncovering" or "discovering" the understandings. Essential questions are used to help guide students towards the essential understandings.