Teaching for Understanding

I don't want to say much about the article, because I want you to read it for next week. However, I would like introduce it a bit, and to suggest an extension of the author's ideas that I have found to be very useful.

The article makes the useful distinction between…

A view of understanding and the demonstration of understanding based on the usual types of content questions. These questions emphasize knowledge & comprehension.

A view of understanding and the demonstration of understanding based on asking students to "perform" with the information. These emphasize application, analysis, synthesis & evaluation.

Worrisome thing #1: I think this is an important distinction! However, when applying this important, distinction, I have noticed that many teachers minimize the time spent acquiring the content information that will be necessary for the performances, and are then disappointed when students, "don't seem to know the vocabulary and concepts ." So, I'd like to remind you that here are some hierarchicalness to Blooms taxonomy → you can't use what you don't have. I'd also like to remind you that there is much taxonomyness to it as well → "lower level skills" are greatly reinforced by performance of "higher levels skills"

Worrisome thing #2: Being able to "perform" with material is very important! Application, analysis, synthesis, & evaluation are critical to the actual use of the things we want our students to learn. However, beyond performance is, I think, another level of understanding → when one can articulate the process used to render the performance.   This is the basis of an old saying (among teachers) that "Those who can do. Those who understand what they are doing teach!" We've all known folks who were great at what they did, but couldn't articulate the processes that led to the performance. This is why several of the study questions in Psyc941 ask you to articulate not only the content, but the underlying cognitive structure and/or the script relate to a specific application or "performance".

So, I would like to add to the definition of "performance" espoused by this article …

A view of understanding and the demonstration of understanding based on asking student to "articulate" the information and processes (usually identification, analysis & synthesis) which are the basis for successful performance of an application or an evaluation.