

The Six A's of Designing Projects

Adria Steinberg, *Real Learning, Real Work* (1997)

Authenticity

Does the project emanate from a problem that has meaning to the student?

Is it a problem or question that might actually be tackled by an adult at work or in the community?

Do students create or produce something that has personal and/or social value, beyond the school setting?

Academic Rigor

Does the project lead students to acquire and apply knowledge central to one or more discipline or content areas?

Does it challenge students to use methods of inquiry central to one or more disciplines (e.g., to think like a scientist)?

Do students develop higher order thinking skills and habits of mind? (e.g., searching for evidence, taking different perspectives)?

Applied Learning

Does the learning take place in the context of a semi-structured problem, grounded in life and work in the world beyond school?

Does the project lead students to acquire and use competencies expected in high performance work organizations (e.g., teamwork, appropriate use of technology, problem solving and communication)?

Does the work require students to develop organizational and self-management skills?

Active Exploration

Do students spend significant amounts of time doing field-based work?

Does the project require students to engage in real investigations, using a variety of methods, media, and sources?

Are students expected to communicate what they are learning through presentation and/or performance?

Adult Relationships

Do students meet and observe adults with relevant expertise and experience?

Do students have an opportunity to work closely with at least one adult?

Do adults collaborate on the design and assessment of student work?

Assessment

Do students reflect regularly on their learning using clear project criteria that they have helped to set?

Do adults from outside the classroom help students develop a sense of real world standards for this type of work?

Will there be opportunities for regular assessment of student work through a range of methods?