

The Five A's

Questions to Ask When Designing Projects

AUTHENTICITY

1. Does the project emanate from a problem or question that has meaning to the student?
2. Does it provide opportunities to create or produce something that has personal and/or social value?
3. Is there a real audience (set of recipients) for this work?

ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Do students meet and observe adults with relevant expertise and experience?
2. Do students work closely with and get to know at least one adult?
3. Do the adults collaborate with one another and students on the design and assessment of project work?

ACADEMIC RIGOR

1. Does the project lead students to acquire and apply knowledge related to one or more discipline or content area?
2. Does it help students develop skills in problem-solving and other forms of higher order thinking?
3. Does it help students develop the habits of mind and work habits required to complete complex tasks?

ACTIVE LEARNING

1. Do students spend significant amounts of time doing fielding based work on the project?
2. Does it require students to engage in real investigation, using a variety of methods, media, and sources in their exploration?
3. Do students complete at least one product with usefulness outside of a school setting?

ASSESSMENT

1. Do students help to set the criteria for the project?
2. Do students reflect on their learning and engage in periodic self-assessment?
3. Are adults from outside the classroom involved in the assessment of the work?

For Further Information

A. Steinberg, *Real learning, Real Work*. New York: Routledge, available Fall 1997