

# The Six A's of Designing Projects

(Developed by Adria Steinberg, Jobs for the Future. Used by permission.)

## **AUTHENTICITY**

- ▶ Does the project emanate from a problem or question 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 area?
- ▶ Does it challenge students to use methods of inquiry central to one or more discipline? (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 communications)?
- ▶ 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 investigation, 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 PRACTICES**

- ▶ 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, including exhibitions and portfolios?

# Six A's Project Examination Tool

*Directions: As you investigate a project, use this grid to keep track of evidence you see of each of the Six A's factors.*

THE A's	ATTRIBUTES	EVIDENCE
ACADEMIC RIGOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students acquire and apply knowledge central to one or more discipline or content area</li> <li>▪ Students use methods of inquiry central to one or more discipline (e.g., to think like a scientist)</li> <li>▪ Students develop higher order thinking skills and habits of mind (e.g., searching for evidence, taking different perspectives)</li> </ul>	
AUTHENTICITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project emanates from a problem or question that has meaning to the student</li> <li>▪ Problem or question is one that might actually be tackled by an adult at work or in the community</li> <li>▪ Students create or produce something that has personal and/or social value beyond the school setting</li> </ul>	
APPLIED LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students solve a semi-structured problem (e.g., designing a product, improving a system, or organizing an event) that is grounded in a context of life and work beyond the school walls</li> <li>▪ Students acquire and use competencies expected in high performance work organizations (e.g., teamwork, problem solving)</li> <li>▪ Work requires students to develop organizational and self-management skills</li> </ul>	

*Six A's project investigation tool continued...*

THE A's	ATTRIBUTES	EVIDENCE
ACTIVE EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students spend significant amounts of time doing field-based work</li> <li>▪ Students engage in real investigations using a variety of methods, media, and sources</li> <li>▪ Students communicate what they learn through presentations</li> </ul>	
ADULT RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students meet and observe adults with relevant expertise and experience</li> <li>▪ Students work closely with at least one adult</li> <li>▪ Adults collaborate on the design and assessment of student work</li> </ul>	
ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students reflect regularly on their learning, using clear project criteria that they have helped to set</li> <li>▪ Adults from outside the classroom help students develop a sense of the real world standards for this type of work</li> <li>▪ There are opportunities for regular assessment of student work through a range of methods, including exhibitions and portfolios</li> </ul>	