

# 6 A's Project Design Template



*This design template leads you through key questions you'll want to address in building a new project. You may want to have a copy of your course content standards handy as you work your way through the template. For more information on the Six A's, contact [www.swansonandcosgrave.com](http://www.swansonandcosgrave.com).*

## ACADEMIC RIGOR

1. What is the central problem or **“essential question”** addressed by the project?  
*(Ex: What factors affect the quality of water and how do we measure them? What does it mean to be an “American”?)*

2. Which **habits of mind** will students develop through this project? How will students demonstrate these behaviors?

HABITS OF MIND	HOW STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE
Ex: Thinking about thinking (metacognition)	Ex: Students will write a self-reflection paper at end of project.

3. Which national, state, and local **standards** are addressed by this project? What will be the evidence that students have met the standard? (Include content and skill standards.)

STANDARD	EVIDENCE
Ex: CA State Language Arts Standard 2.2: Prepare a bibliography of reference materials for a report using a variety of documents.	Ex: Students will create project web sites that include a bibliography page listing at least 20 different published sources of various types.
Ex: School ESLR #4: Students will use technology effectively to communicate and solve problems.	Ex: Students will use computer technology to create web pages.

4. What key course **concepts, themes, or inquiry methods** are addressed by this project? *(Ex: Using the substitution method to solve equations, creative writing, think like a scientist...)*

## AUTHENTICITY

5. Where in the “**real world**” might one see the problem or question addressed by the project tackled by an adult at work or in the community?

*(Ex: Local fish and game scientists also study species in our local creek.)*

6. How do you know that the problem or question is **meaningful to students**?

*(Ex: Students are genuinely interested in the advertising techniques they see in popular media. Specific topic choice was also offered.)*

7. What type of **audience** might be appropriate for the students' work?

*(Ex: Industry experts, community decision-makers, parents, other staff members, local service clubs, other students...)*

## ACTIVE EXPLORATION

8. What **field-based activities** does the project require students to conduct?

*(Ex: interview experts, participate in a work-site visit, collect survey data, collect scientific data...)*

9. Which of the following **methods and sources of information** are students expected to use in the project? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Interviewing
- Observing, documenting, and/or surveying
- Video or audio-taping
- Gathering and reviewing published information
- Searching on-line and electronic databases
- Creating a symbolic representation (e/g/, model building, map making)

## APPLIED LEARNING

10. How will students **apply** the knowledge they are learning to a complex or semi-structured problem? What will they actually **do**?

*(Ex: Students design a product, organizing an event, produce a CD)*

11. Which of the following **competencies** does the project provide students with opportunities to develop? *(Check all that apply)*

- Work collaboratively in teams
- Apply technology
- Communicate ideas and information
- Collect, organize, and analyze information

12. Which of the following **self-management skills** does the project require students to use?

- Develop and follow a work plan for the project that includes a timeline
- Prioritize and organize distinct pieces of the project work
- Meet deadlines
- Know how to identify and allocate resources

## ADULT CONNECTIONS

13. Do students have access to at least **one other adult** with expertise relevant to their project who can address questions, provide feedback, etc.?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

14. Does the project offer students the opportunity to develop a broader understanding of the relevant field of work through observing adults during at least on in-depth **work site visit**?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

15. Does at least one adult from outside the classroom help students develop a sense of the **real world standards** for the type of work arising from their project?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

16. What **roles** will adults outside of the classroom play in this project, and how will students **connect** with these individuals?

*(Ex: Structural engineers will provide feedback to student teams on bridge designs. Teacher contacts will be used.)*

## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

17. What are the **criteria** for measuring student growth in each of the following?

- ▶ Habits of mind:
- ▶ Content knowledge:
- ▶ Applied learning goals:

18. Are students asked to **review** and/or **help establish** project criteria?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

19. Which of the following methods of **structured self-assessment** of progress are students expected to use? (*Check all that apply*)

- Journals and work logs
- Conferences with teachers or adult mentors
- Conferences with peers
- Using a rubric or other assessment measure
- Reviewing their progress against a work plan they developed for the project
- Identifying areas where improvement has occurred and where it is needed

20. Do students receive **ongoing feedback** on their work-in-progress from teachers, mentors, and peers?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

21. What **benchmark deliverables** are students expected to complete prior to the final product or outcome?

(*Ex: proposal, work plan, reflection paper, mini-presentation, model...*)

22. Do students prepare a **culminating exhibition, performance, or demonstration** at the completion of their project that shows their ability to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained?

- Yes       No       Not Sure

23. What opportunities are students given to conduct individual, small group and whole class **reflections on their learning** and to offer suggestions for future class projects?

(*Ex: Small group reflection and whole-class debrief held the day after final exhibition.*)