



Designing for Learning with Five Key Concepts

Introduction

Whether we are designing training events with adult practitioners or school-based projects for children, we approach the design of learning experiences with certain principles in mind. However, this is not 'formulaic' design. While we may use certain tools and strategies on a regular basis, how and where they occur will depend on the specific context for which we are designing. Are we designing for a ninety-minute twilight or a two-week project with five-year olds? Is there specific area of knowledge to be considered or the demonstration of certain skills?

In the document you are about to read, we have expanded on different aspects of our design thinking. So, whether you are designing for a small group 'Health and Wellbeing' task, a whole-school interdisciplinary project, 1+ 2 languages or outdoor learning, although the intended experiences and outcomes may be different, the design *principles* remain the same.

There are four main parts to this document:

- **1: Designing with Five Key Concepts** - A brief definition of each of the Key Concepts and how they are integrated.
- **2: Rituals and Routines** - Our rationale for establishing 'safety' in order to introduce 'challenge'.
- **3: Essential Questions** - How tasks and projects can be related to the world beyond the learning environment.
- **4: Designing for Problem-Based Learning** - A more detailed look at the elements which comprise a problem-based task or mini-project.

Together, they provide key background information for consideration when thinking about the design of project-based learning.

1: Designing with Five Key Concepts

When **we** think about designing a problem-based task, project or a series of experiences, we inevitably consider these five key concepts:



Community Learning



This is about actively and purposefully paying attention to relationships within a learning environment. Feeling threatened, disrespected, anxious or fearful impedes the learning process. It can prevent us from taking risks and making connections. If learners exist in an environment which they believe is 'fair' and 'safe', they are more likely to engage 'fully' and take risks necessary to deal effectively with the challenges they encounter in personal, academic and social contexts. Exploring what 'fair' and 'safe' means in different contexts and for different individuals or groups, is an ongoing conversation, which is enriched by new experiences. The different contexts could be the nature of the task (individual or collaborative; structured or open-ended; small group or large group) or whether it is in-person, blended or online? What will engaging safely, fairly and fully look and sound like in each of these contexts? What will be the same and what will be different?

Experiential Learning



We can learn about aspects of life through remote secondary sources such as books and lectures. Sometimes, this is the only reasonable way of accessing knowledge. However, learning becomes deep and embedded when we have to actively engage in experiences which require us to directly apply or discover desired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Learning is more powerful and memorable when we are engaged in active, immediate and authentic experiences from which we can make our own personal sense of the world, either alone or through discussion with others.

Developing skills for learning, life and work is best done by engaging in experiences where these skills are necessary. These are experiences which actively engage learners and provide opportunity and also challenge rather than just passively inform.

By exploring and becoming familiar with the variety of tools available on different virtual learning platforms and apps, online or blended experiences can be designed to provide opportunities for active engagement, creative and critical thinking, individual and collaborative problem-solving and, therefore, all the skills and attitudes needed to be successful at these things.



Problem-Based Learning



Every day we are faced with 'problems'. Some are so mundane and familiar that we no longer consider them an issue. We effortlessly apply the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to routine challenges e.g. getting up on time or cooking a meal! However, effective strategies for solving problems and creating solutions can be encouraged by offering opportunities to develop them. Learning becomes engaging when it involves solving problems that are meaningful and relevant to us, thus motivating ourselves to explore, innovate and become enterprising.

Solving problems involves a variety of skills. Clarification and chunking*. Creative thinking to produce ideas for solutions, communication, critical thinking, decision-making, organisation, management of resources, evaluation etc. These are generic skills. Sometimes problems will require 'subject' specific skills e.g. measuring weight or understanding iambic pentameter. When we offer truly interdisciplinary learning, we are inviting learners to call upon generic skills and a variety of 'subject' specific skills in order to find solutions to problems.

*chunking is a psycholinguistic term referring to how we break down a stream of information into understandable, manageable 'chunks'.



Quality Learning



Quality is a reflection of our values. It is a reflection of how much we care. It indicates how much we want to achieve - a goal, an aim. 'Deep' learning is quality learning. It is embedded. We can frequently achieve desired results with 'shallow' learning, like 'cramming' for a test or producing glossy policy documents which are never followed - all surface, no depth or substance. When we care, we are motivated to achieve or exceed our goals and aims. When we care, if we fall short of our goals or aims, we are motivated to find a way to 'close the gap'. Clear quality criteria or success criteria help us to identify and evaluate the degree of quality or success. Effective feedback can engage us in learning conversations which enable also enable us to identify degrees of quality and begin the reflection process in which we can decide 'next steps'.



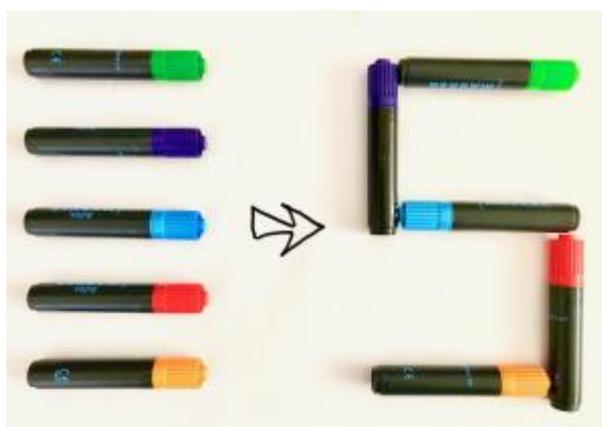
Reflective Learning



Generally, people do not learn from experience alone. They learn from reflecting upon the experience. Purposeful reflection is vital in order to make connections to prior knowledge and understanding, transfer and apply learning to new situations and explore creative solutions. When we reflect, we engage with our learning. Reflection takes time and needs to be specifically planned for when designing learning opportunities. The more we reflect, the more connections we make and the opportunity for more creative solutions is created. The more we reflect, the more we see wider connections and break down the boundaries which compartmentalise learning for convenience.



Five Become One



We do not see these five concepts as isolated entities but rather five different aspects of the same thing. The human body has different integrated systems e.g. nervous, digestive, circulatory. When we eat, we do not shut down the other systems to focus on digestion. Depending on circumstances, the activity of one system may be prioritised. However, all systems continue to be essential to the proper functioning of the prioritised one. So, when learners are exploring problem-solving, we do not stop considering the impact of community or the importance of paying attention to quality outcomes. However, just as focussing on healthy eating may have a positive effect on the whole body, focussing on one aspect of learning for a time, can have a positive impact on other aspects. Focus but do not compartmentalise or isolate.

There is a connection here with interdisciplinary learning. We view interdisciplinary problem-solving as something which involves applying knowledge and skills from different disciplines in order to achieve a solution. Different problems may require an emphasis on a particular discipline or subject but the ultimate solution will also require the support of other disciplines or subjects.

Lots of 'disciplinary' - not much 'inter'!

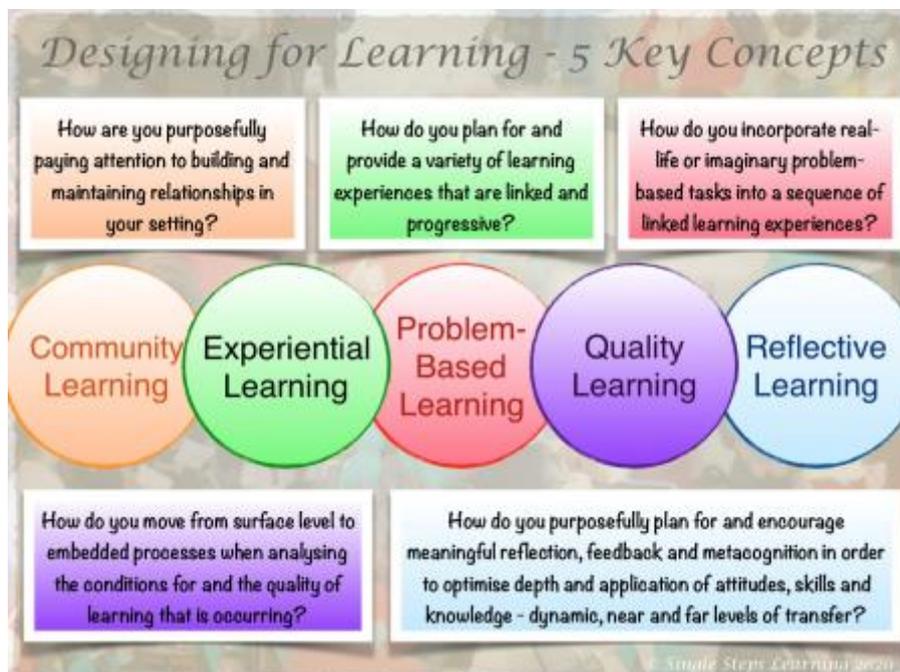
This is different to the compartmentalising of disciplines but having a unifying theme e.g. art – painting a tree design; maths – calculating tree heights; biology – a description of the life cycle of a tree; English – a poem about a tree. Lots of 'disciplinary' - not much 'inter'!

When the **experiences** are meaningful **problems**, we have the opportunity to use tools, develop strategies and their associated knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is important to take the time to **reflect** upon not only the **quality** of our solution (and to what degree we missed, achieved or

exceeded our specific success criteria) but also the quality of our process - especially if it was a collaborative effort. Our confidence to take risks when tackling new challenges may be directly affected by our environment. A supportive, collaborative **community** encourages and empowers both responsible citizenship and individual achievement.

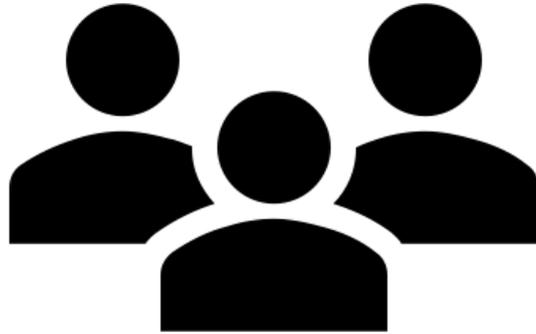


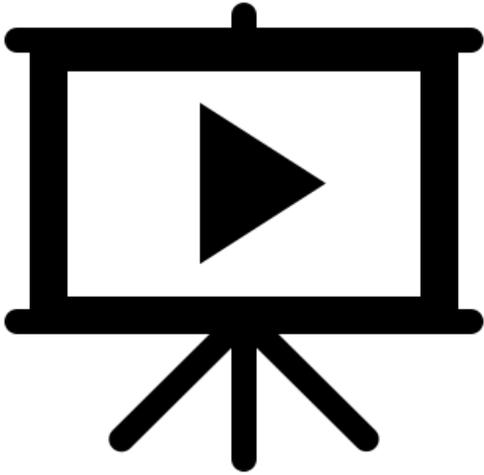
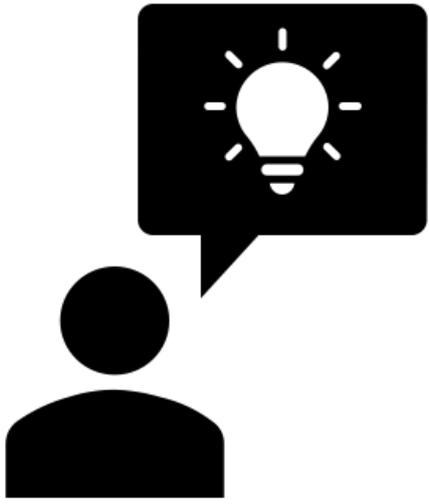
'To raise a child who is comfortable enough to leave you, means you've done your job. They are not ours to keep but to teach how to soar on their own.' Author Unknown

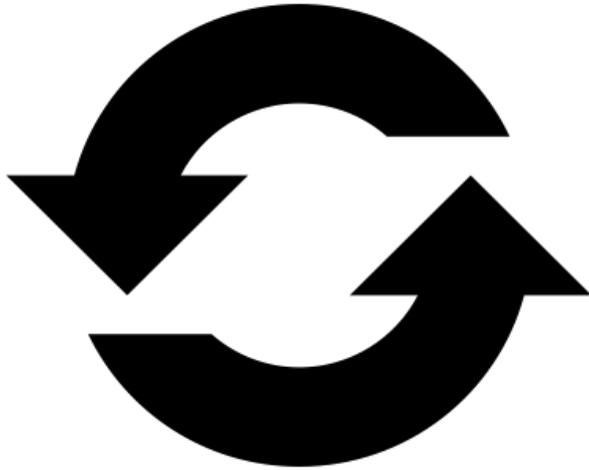
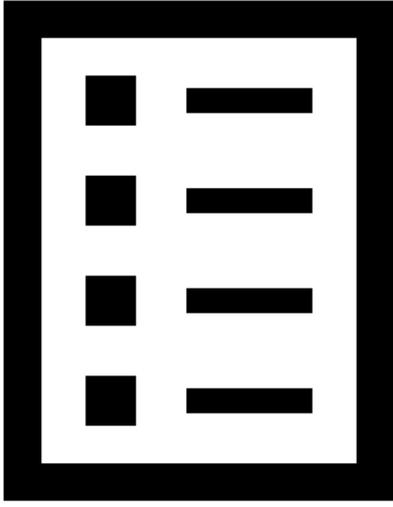


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2: Rituals and Routines







When we are working with a class on a project, we establish a pattern of ‘activities’ at the beginning of each session, which we repeat each time we work with that class. This adds a degree of safety for those that need to know what is going to happen. Sometimes, we incorporate signals or cues with which they are already familiar. However, as far as possible, we maintain the pattern throughout the project.

Our ritual is not **the** ritual. It works for us. There is no ‘right’ way, only a way that works for an educator and their learners. We don’t necessarily introduce it all at once but after a few days, the pattern looks something like this:

- **Check-in** (individual/small group) – could be a general ‘How are you?’ or a focused question – ‘Where is your favourite place to sit and think? Why?’ This offers an immediate opportunity for learners’ engagement.
- A ‘**design of the day**’ – showing what we hope to achieve during the upcoming session and how it relates to previous sessions.
- **Reflection** upon prior learning involving **effective visual feedback** – usually photographs or video, followed by a discussion about which focus skills were involved and which will be needed for the next task.
- A rendition of a ‘**project song**’ – often an important cue for younger learners.
- An **introduction** to the next task, including success criteria – which we term a ‘quality checklist’.



Reflection, Connection and Progression

Too many changes can be overwhelming and a distraction

Essentially this ritual is a process of **reflection, connection and progression**. The familiarity with the ritual means that learners are able to focus on the new elements which are introduced. Too many changes can be overwhelming and a distraction. (In his best-selling book ‘Thinking Fast and Slow’,

psychologist Daniel Kahneman provides evidence about how cognitive overload affects the quality of performance.)

Imagine the impact on a relatively straightforward task, if the layout of a classroom was changed daily, including the location of everyday resources. Now imagine the impact these changes would have on the success of an *unfamiliar* task, which may be requiring the application of new skills and/or knowledge.

Many of us are able to drive a car along a familiar route on 'automatic pilot'. We can engage in conversation, listen to music or news programmes, then, hopefully, arrive safely at our destination with very little stress experienced. We 'automatically' check for hazards and perform tasks and manoeuvres.

However, what happens to us when our familiar route is no longer an option. We have a problem to solve!

'Put a sock in it!'

Our strategy may involve using a SatNav. Even though the instructions may be clear and precise, they can still be confusing. Consider the instruction 'Continue east.' How many of us sitting in our vehicles, at night (or even in daylight), immediately know which way is east? A heated discussion may break out amongst passengers, creating more uncertainty and stress for the driver. Many of us prefer to reduce external distraction such by turning off music, news or politely asking our passengers to 'put a sock in it!'

Impatient fellow motorists may demonstrate their frustration at our hesitation, further increasing stress levels. Then we hear, 'In 250 yards, turn right into New Street.' So, now we are stressed, and trying to calculate 250 yards (a unit of measurement we now only hear on the SatNav) and there are a series of rapidly approaching possible right turns...and no street signs. Much to our annoyance, the passengers are offering conflicting advice...

Now let's imagine having to make an unfamiliar journey, in a car whose controls are reversed (e.g. right-hand drive to left-hand drive) and the SatNav is in different regional accent! Maybe we don't want to imagine that!

However, perhaps we should consider that this could be the experience for learners when too many things are changed at once. When there is no routine or ritual. The learning process is over-ridden by anxiety and a grasping for coping strategies.

The problem of 'tradition'

A final 'health' warning...rituals and routines are there for a purpose, to establish patterns which provide a degree of 'safety'. However, they are not an end in themselves. They also need a degree of flexibility. Needs may change according to circumstance. Once meaningful rituals must never become meaningless, redundant traditions - 'we do it this way because that's the way we've always done it'.

To return to the driving analogy. Sometimes, a route becomes so familiar that we are not prepared to explore other possibilities, even when it becomes clear that it is no longer the best option. Stuck in a daily traffic jam we may resort to blaming other motorists, town planners or the demise of society in general, rather than recognise that, as the driver, it is our responsibility to explore the world beyond our comfort zones.

As we mentioned at the beginning, we establish routines and rituals that work for us but we are quite happy to change or modify them if they are not working for a specific group of learners.

Which rituals and routines have you established with learners? How do they contribute to the learning environment and the learning process? What do the learners think about them?

3: Essential Questions

'Deeper, interconnected thinking across multiple disciplines.'



The design of projects are framed by essential questions that connect the sequence of linked learning experiences to wider issues, resulting in deeper, interconnected thinking across multiple disciplines.

There are no 'hard and fast' rules about what constitutes an essential question. Usually, there are no 'cut and dried' answers either. Also, the breadth/depth of the question may vary according to age and stage of learners. Some *could* be closed questions, e.g. '*Should school attendance be compulsory?*' It is, however, the different reasoning and justifications behind a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer, which can lead to the sharing of multiple perspectives and an enlightening debate.

Depending upon the context, the same series of linked learning experiences could be connected to different essential questions. For example, a group of learners may undertake a collaborative

project on transport. In our project 'From Here To There', learners built prototypes, upscaled, built models, researched vehicle types, calculated production costs and explored modifications which would reduce pollution.

If the context was environmental pollution, a question could be:

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'Fewer journeys would reduce pollution. Which journeys are necessary and which are unnecessary?'

If the overarching context is the coronavirus pandemic and its impact, we could ask:

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'During the pandemic, many people were forced to work from home instead of travelling to a work-place. If this was to continue, what would the advantages, disadvantages or challenges be of this way of working - for individuals, communities and industry?'

Or we could ask a question unrelated to transport but focussed on the collaborative process.

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'As we emerge from lockdown, how do we collaborate safely, fairly and fully until a vaccination program has been successfully completed?'

Some practitioners prefer to think of an essential question and design their linked learning 'towards' it. Others prefer to design the experiences and consider which would be the best questions to emerge from them – 'backwards' design. Whatever works!

It is important to remember that no definitive answers are required. As stated previously, the questions are designed to provoke thinking, generate debate and explore perspectives. They encourage thinking about how actions can have many possible effects and outcomes.

In terms of problem-solving, they encourage those involved to build consensus and seek out the highest quality solutions. Embedded in the process of trying to answer the questions are skills and attitudes for 'learning, life and work' – reflection, active listening, respectful disagreement, creative and critical thinking, explanation and justification as well as the application of knowledge and understanding from different disciplines.

"Is it our job to toughen up our children and young people to face a cruel and heartless world or is it our job to raise children and young people who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless?"



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How often do learners have the opportunity to connect what they are learning in their setting to the world with which they are familiar? How is it made relevant to them?

4: Designing for an In-Person, Blended or Online Approach

In March 2020, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, like many practitioners, we were forced to consider different ways of providing learning experiences via digital media, as an alternative or in addition to in-person provision. We revisited the principles of our approach and asked what these could look like and sound like in a virtual learning environment (perhaps blended with some physical school attendance). For each of the main elements of a project or task, we asked some fundamental questions. *Why is this element important? What methods are available to provide opportunities for this element, and where could these opportunities take place?*

Regardless of method of provision (online/blended/in-person) before we begin a project, we still ask ourselves the following questions. These are the same basic questions that practitioners ask themselves before designing learning. However, although our design will be based around the answers to these questions, we are still open to responding to directions suggested by the learners themselves.

Content	<p>Q: In order to be successful during this project/task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which aspects of curriculum knowledge (and understanding) will need to be applied (prior knowledge) and which will need to be acquired (new knowledge)? • which specific or generic skills will need to be applied or acquired? • which attitudes are likely to be most important? How will this be defined and made 'visible'? <p>When designing the project or task, it is worth making the distinction between prior learning and learning to be acquired. If there is too much 'new' content e.g. new knowledge and new skills and new attitudes, this could prove overwhelming. For example, if a learner is unfamiliar with skills needed to create or present in digital media and is also unfamiliar with content knowledge and skills, this could lead to frustration. However, learning a new skill but applying prior knowledge using a familiar context, means that the focus is on the skill.</p>
Resources	<p>Q: In order to be successful at this project/task, what are the basic or essential resources a learner will need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical tools (e.g. scissors, ruler etc.) • Physical materials (paper, cardboard, elastic bands etc.) • Books? Readings? • Digital hardware (laptop, PC, camera etc.) • Digital software (word processing package, image-editing, animation etc.) • Connectivity (Wi-Fi, sufficient data package). <p>Q: Which are the school able to supply and which will be supplied by parents/carers?</p>
Duration	<p>Q: What is a realistic time-frame for the project considering all factors (e.g. resources and age/stage of the learners)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A week? • A fortnight? • A half-term? • A whole term? <p>A reasonable time should be allocated not just for completing a project/task but it should be ensured that time is dedicated to reflecting upon learning. Reflection sessions are not just evaluative/quantitative (i.e. to what degree success criteria have been met) but should also be qualitative – allowing learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share and discuss their experiences; • make connections with prior learning; • hearing different perspectives or solutions; • connect or transfer learning to the world beyond the immediate task or project.
Linked Learning Experiences	<p>Q: How is a sequence of tasks within a project connected? To what degree is progression built in so that an aspect or aspects of learning (knowledge, skill, attitude) are being transferred?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one task may involve researching and recording information. A subsequent task may be presenting that information in a specific format or a learner-chosen format. The presentation could be a single element in a larger presentation/product. • a story narrative may be connected by meeting different characters and solving different problems but developing specific skills and attitudes about problem-solving. <p>It is important that learners see that there learning is connected and not just isolated tasks with no relevance to themselves or the real world (see Reflection).</p>

In the following tables, we have listed project elements and the purpose of their inclusion. We have also indicated possible methods of how each element may be provided. This list is not exhaustive, which is why we have provided a 'Notes/What if...' for additional considerations or inspiration!

We have introduced each element in a logical order but we need to clearly state that this is **not** a prescriptive formula. Each element may occur several times throughout a mini-project. For example, individual or group reflection may take place within or after each learning experience has been completed. However, the format and the depth of reflection could be different each time.

The first few elements are concerned with stimulating engagement and preparation. '**Experiential Learning**' which motivates and in which learners roles are authentic.

Project Element	Purpose (Why?)	Method (How/where?)	Notes/What if...?
Project Hook or Scenario	This has to be something to engage learners' interest, give them a reason to interact and give purpose to the project as a whole. This could be a 'real life' or fictional (in a real-world context) scenario. Or it could be set in a fantasy/fairy-tale universe which learners are familiar with. The 'buy-in' is important. A scenario usually involves learners helping someone by using/developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes	How could a hook could be introduced? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbally (in person/Google classroom) • email • letter • document • video (YouTube) 	
Direct teaching Essential Knowledge Input	In order to be successful in a future task, learners may need to acquire new knowledge, skills or attitudes and a chance to become familiar with them before applying them in a more complex or challenging problem-based task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstration • video • reading & discussion • 'lecture' 	
Creating Teams & Team Roles	You have to have at least one other person in order to collaborate! In a mini-project, we normally have no more than 3 in a team. Team roles confer responsibility and can be linked to role description success criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-selection • adult selection (appearing to be random) • truly random selection 	

Problem-based tasks are one type of experience within a project. The next set of elements involves the process of a problem-based task itself. '**Problem-Based Learning**' encourages learners to

develop strategies and tools, apply and deepen their knowledge and understanding, and provides a realistic context to explore skills and attitudes required to learning, life and work.

	Project Element	Purpose (Why?)	Method (How/where?)	Notes/What if...?
Problem-Based Task	Task Scenario	This could be linked to the overarching hook or stand-alone. Like the project hook, it gives a purpose for the task.	How could a hook could be introduced? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> verbally (in person/Google classroom) email letter document video (YouTube) 	
	Clarification and identifying success criteria	Regardless of introduction method, learners may have different understanding of what is being asked of them? In an individual task, they may want to establish their own or clarify the understanding of pre-determined success criteria.	How/where will learners be given an opportunity to clarify their understanding or the project or an individual task? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in person Google classroom message board 	
	Sharing Ideas	Not everyone can immediately generate ideas. Some learners need a 'spark' to get them going, while some prefer the ideas of others which they can take forward in their own way (as individuals or a small group).	How/where will learners be given an opportunity to share (and record?) and discuss ideas for solving problems etc? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google classroom message board documents 	
	Collaboration	Learners work together to share ideas, make decisions, organise and manage, create products, reflect on progress, self-evaluation against success criteria etc	How/where will 'teams/groups' of learners be able to communicate effectively during different phases of a project/task? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google sites Video/phone? 	

When the problem-based task is complete, there is usually an opportunity to share results. This could be done as an informal 'show and tell' or a formal presentation to peers or invited guests.

	Project Element	Purpose (Why?)	Method (How/where?)	Notes/What if...?
	Sharing Outcomes or Presentations	Learners have the opportunity to 'present' the outcome/product of a task for celebration and (if appropriate) peer-evaluation against success criteria.	How/where will teams or individuals share/display their final 'products'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> physical classroom Google classroom Google sites (slides, docs etc.) video (YouTube) 	

Effective Feedback is in integral part of 'Quality Learning'. When learners or educators are evaluating products or process, this is done as objectively as possible using the success or quality criteria which were established at the beginning of the task. Feedback should be directly related to these criteria. To what degree were the criteria met or exceeded? Learners should also be given the opportunity to question or correct the feedback, justify or explain their choices.

Additionally, feedback doesn't always have to happen at the end of a task. Timely feedback (perhaps phrased as provocative/coaching questions) may be pertinent during a task.

	Project Element	Purpose (Why?)	Method (How/where?)	Notes/What if...?
Effective Feedback	Evaluating Outcomes	Learners evaluate the quality of their product and process against success criteria which were established at the beginning of the task (or modified during the task).	How/where will teams or individuals evaluate their own products or the products of peers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> physical classroom? verbally? written (on pro-forma containing success criteria or a rubric) on a document or slide? 	
	Educator Feedback	The educator evaluates the quality of learners' product and process against success criteria which were established at the beginning of the task (or modified during the task). The educator can also provide feedback which peer and self-evaluation might miss. This should be part of an ongoing learning conversation between educator and learners.	How/where will educators evaluate and provide feedback? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> coaching post-its during a task? see-saw? verbally? written (on pro-forma containing success criteria or a rubric) on a document or slide? 	

'Effective Feedback, as a concept, seems simple and assumed, but it is complex to achieve. It takes time and effort, coupled with belief and values.'

Effective Feedback has maximum impact on learning when it moves from being a set of 'tools' to becoming embedded in the learning process. When learners and educators expect, invite and own quality feedback at all levels; when it is not a 'gimmick' but an essential element to personal, learner and professional growth; when feedback causes thinking, not a defensive response; when a learning culture is established; when trust develops.

Effective Feedback, as a concept, seems simple and assumed, but it is complex to achieve. It takes time and effort, coupled with belief and values.

Reflective Learning is one of our five Key concepts. We need to reflect upon feedback if we are going to learn from it. Reflection doesn't always happen at the end of a task. Sometimes, it is valuable and necessary to reflect upon either the process or product during a task. Moreover, depending upon the nature of the task several reflection sessions may be needed!

	Project Element	Purpose (Why?)	Method (How/where?)	Notes/What if...?
	Reflection	Learners have the opportunity to reflect upon the task beyond the evaluation process . They discuss aspects of the task which they found relevant to their learning – success and challenges; knowledge/skill gaps and acquisitions; the process of problem-solving or collaboration; relevance to the project; connections to prior learning and connection to the world beyond the classroom. Establish next steps. Deep Learning!	How/where will learners have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences during a task/project. How/where will reflections/next steps be recorded? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reflection circle? • Individual 'post-it'? • Google slides? • Learning log/blog/vlog? 	

During a project we are constantly paying attention to relationships and interactions. How are learners taking responsibility for themselves and the success of their group? How are they managing conflicting opinions or needs, especially when a task is challenging. Therefore it is necessary to place within a project elements which address the concept of '**Community Learning**', so that learners have and opportunity to express themselves and explore what it means to engage safely, fairly and fully in different contexts.

Community	Check-In or Monitoring	Some learners will need to check-in for reassurance or to ask for support and guidance. Conversely some who feel no need for support may actually need guidance if they have veered off in a direction which is not relevant to the task (even if it is with great enthusiasm!)	How/where will learners be given an opportunity to check in for emotional or academic/technical support? How will practitioners monitor progress? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'In school' session • Google classroom • Google Sites (docs/slides etc.) 	
	Community Building Task	These can be games, activities or ice-breakers. Their purpose is to provide vehicle for developing collaborative skills and attitudes in a context which is not directly related to the academic curriculum. However, the learning from these activities can be directly applied into more complex academic or interdisciplinary tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class/group task • Small group task • Circle games • 'Campfire' games • Ice-breakers etc. 	

Community Contract

The Community Contract is not just a set of rules created by an educator. It is a contract of agreement created by the 'community' which can change according to need. It is the responsibility

for every individual to comply in order to ensure a 'safe and fair' ethos which enables everyone to engage 'fully'. Engaging 'fully' i.e. with an appropriate level of commitment is part of being 'safe and fair'. If someone is not engaging fully in a group or community, then they are not being fair to that community (or themselves). Community or Class Contracts/Charters are not uncommon, often being created at the beginning of a school year. However... what degree of ownership and operation do learners have? How often are the contents referenced or amended? Are they relevant for all occasions e.g. does an 'in-class' contract still work in an 'online' situation?

Some people prefer to create them immediately, others let them 'grow' as the need arises. Whatever, your preference, it is important that it is created for and with the group of learners who are going to use it.

The Community Contract is not just a set of rules created by an educator. It is a contract of agreement created by the 'community' which can change according to need.

Key Questions

What will we see and hear if everyone engages 'safely' during this...

What will we see and hear if everyone engages 'fairly' during this...

What will we see and hear if everyone engages 'fully' during this...

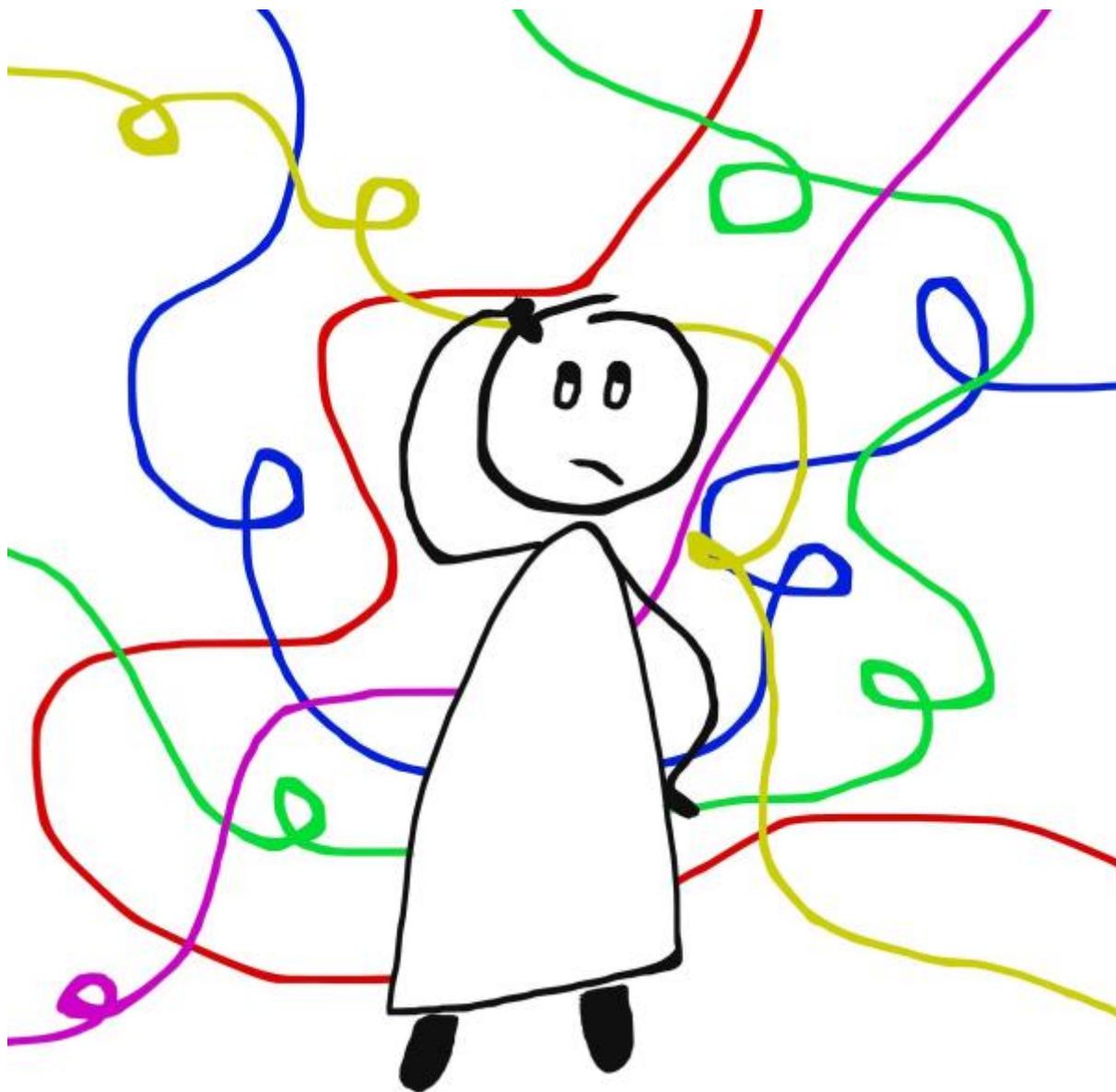
The end of each question has not been completed because it may change according to need. It could be completed using:

- **activity?**
- **project?**
- **game?**
- **discussion?**
- **online lesson?**

Contracts/Charters should not have so many 'rules' or guidelines that they become overwhelming. Effective guidelines are specific and observable* rather than conceptual. For example, considering guidelines for discussion, 'We will see people showing respect', is laudable but quite vague – people may have very different ideas about what respect looks/sounds like - whereas, 'We will only hear one voice at a time.' is specific and 'observable'/'measurable'. In reality, we are constructing success criteria for skills and attitudes.

**we use observable to cover things which can be 'seen' and 'heard'.*

Working With YOUR Learners



Frequently in our careers, we've attended training where we are left scratching our heads about how this applies in practice to our particular learners, their specific needs, their age or their stage of development. The principles of project-based learning (and our five key concepts) are relevant to all ages and situations, but it will look and sound very different depending on the context. This is about customising experiences and selecting tools or methods that are rooted in the principles but maximise the learning of the individuals.

'We don't play in this school! We don't learn in this school! We do learning!'

For younger learners, the emphasis on play-based approaches can make you question how certain elements might fit in practice. However, how you define 'play' and how you organise your environment to 'provoke' learning may already lend itself to the principles of project-based learning

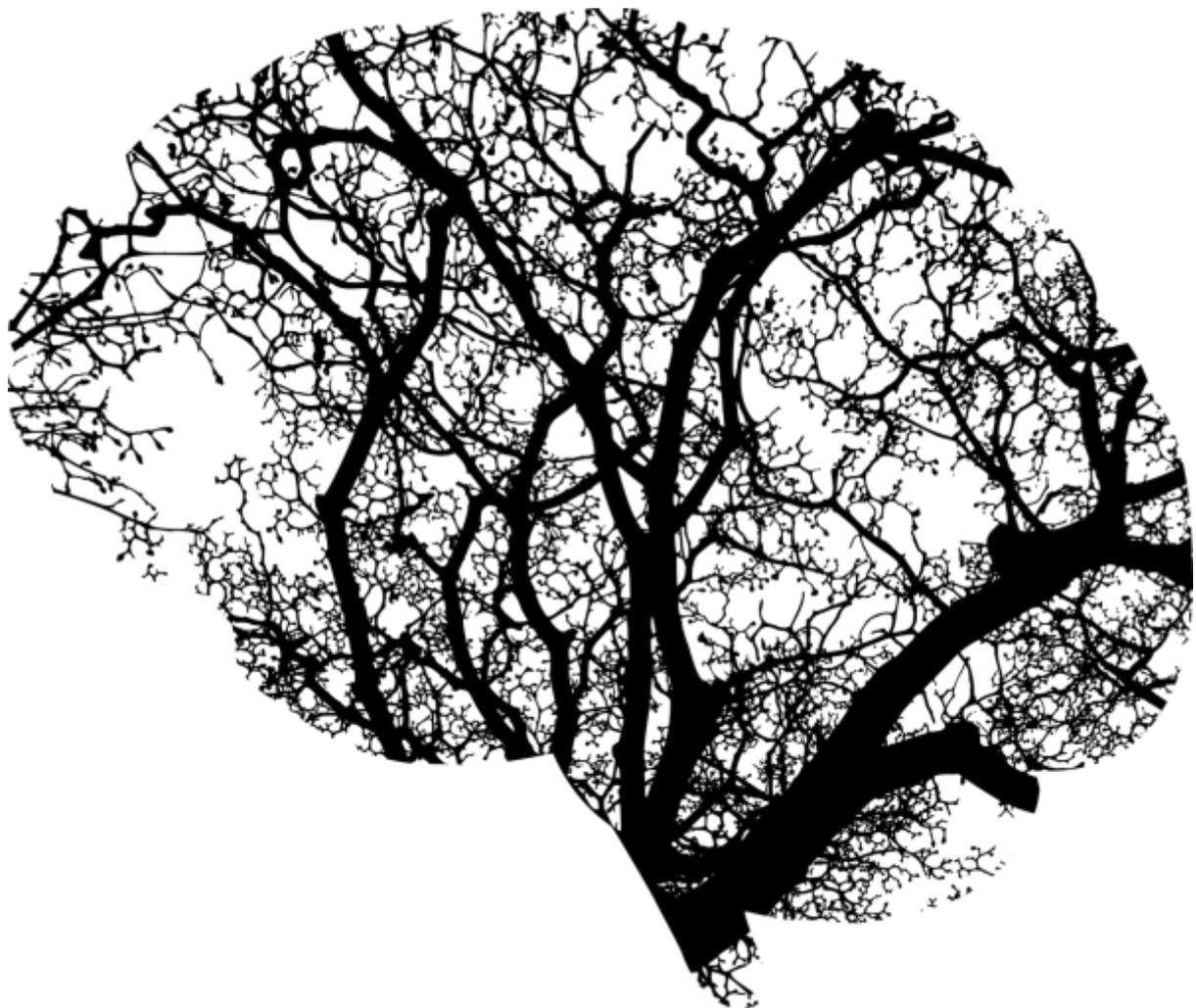
and the five key concepts. It is about having the time and space to consider the connections...and the opportunity to share your thinking and be inspired by others.

*'We don't play in this school! We don't learn in this school! We do **plearning!**'*

Imagine your horror as a teacher, when a 4 year old exclaims the first two sentences above...in front of a council advisor who is conducting a 'learning walk'. This happened. Followed by the phrase '**plearning**' which we quickly adopted as the title for our Foundation Phase Policy (3-7 year olds, now part of Curriculum for Wales). The Five Key Concepts underpinned our active, play-based approach and projects were a key part of our curriculum development.

Section Five of this online training will provide an opportunity to explore two project examples from different age ranges and how they evolved in reality, along with dedicated time to discuss implementation with other educators.

Final Thoughts



Designing for Project-Based Learning can take time and thought and perseverance. After many years, we are still evolving our thinking and practice. It is about seeing connections in the curriculum and, in some cases, being brave enough to take a calculated risk. This is *always* more successful in a supportive setting that values reflective practice. Whatever your circumstances, it is always beneficial to ask yourself what small changes you can make that might have a big impact. It was this type of thinking - small change/big impact (or the '*aggregation of marginal gains*') - that propelled the British cycling team to dominate their sport for ten years.

'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.'
