Guiding Questions for TIP Projects

Please note that this document has been adapted from the following sources—

- Adria Steinberg’s “6 A’s” from her book *Real Learning, Real Work*
- The National Research Council’s report: Education for Life and Work
- The Deeper Learning Network’s recommendations on 21st Century Skills and Competencies

**High-Quality TIP Projects should answer “yes” to these questions far more often than “no.”**

- But please note: The “bar” for high-quality projects will seem, well, high, almost impossibly high, and that’s okay, this is something we are striving for, not something we are expecting in year one... or one and a half.

**Meaning, Value, Authenticity**

- Does the project stem from a problem or question that is meaningful to the students?
- Is the project similar to one that would be undertaken by an adult in the community or workplace?
- Does the project give the students the opportunity to produce something that has value or meaning to the student (and often the community) beyond the school setting?
- Do students see the relevance of their learning and work on this project to the outside world and their own future success?
- Does the project have real meaning and value for the students, value beyond “your grade” and “getting into college”?
- Do students archive their work into a Digital Portfolio or Blog that they can later use to demonstrate their learning and skills (perhaps in a job interview)?

**Cognitive Rigor, 21st Century Skills**

- Do students analyze models of professional quality work in order to determine their success criteria (what they are striving for) on the project?
- Does the project require students to acquire and use skills expected in high-performance work environments (teamwork, problem solving, communication, technology, etc.)?
- Does the project require students to develop organizational and self-management skills?
- Does the project challenge students to develop and demonstrate true expertise on the unit’s theme plus one or more specific content area topics?
- Does the project require students to communicate effectively in writing and oral presentations (construct engaging messages for specific audiences, refine work for clarity and precision, etc.)?

**Active Exploration**

- Does the project require students to engage in inquiry and argumentation (students presented with questions rather than answers... students engage in investigative research... students read for evidence, and formulate and share evidence-based arguments in writing and speech, etc.)?
- Does the project give students opportunities for self-directed learning (where they set goals, monitor their own progress (self-assess), reflect on their own learning (and project’s strengths and growth areas), and make adjustments accordingly)?
Refinement, Authentic Assessment, Exhibition, Reflection

- Are students expected to explain what they learned through a culminating presentation and/or performance?
- Do students regularly reflect on their learning about the theme and specific topics within an academic discipline?
- Do students regularly reflect on their progress towards high-quality work on their projects, using clear criteria for success that they helped construct by looking at real, professional models of high-quality work?
- Do students regularly present their “works” in progress for feedback based on criteria for success that they helped to construct?
- Do students refine their work multiple times before exhibiting their work before real audiences who may ask questions?
- Do students have space, time, and a forum to reflect on their growth through the project and culminating exhibition?

Equity, Collaboration

- Have you structured this project so that all students must work hard to complete the project (meaning one student can’t do all of the heavy lifting and all students contribute)?
- Do all students in the class have the support and access they need for success on this project regardless of their learning or language differences?
- Will all students in the class be challenged by this project (grow their minds and skills as a result of their work on this project)?
- Have you structured the learning experiences on this project in such a way that all students regularly have a chance to make their voices heard in large or small group discussions?
- Have you designed your instruction in such a way that communicates an “academic mindset” – meaning that students believe their hard work will lead to a stronger project and greater learning, so students persist to overcome all obstacles to their learning and growth?
- Have you designed your instruction in such a way that communicates an “inclusive mindset” – that everyone is on the same team and everyone’s work and voice matters on the project?
- Do students have regular opportunities to share their learning with one another and learn from each other?

Character Building

- Does the project allow for students to develop and take ownership of the TIP theme (positive character trait) that’s driving all of the learning and doing and higher purpose of this unit (“perseverance,” “compassion,” “hope”, etc.?)
- Does the project provide students regular opportunities to reflect on and articulate how they are growing as a human being by virtue of the learning and work they are doing on the project?
- Does the project require students to develop intellectual openness (a chance to analyze topics from multiple perspectives, a chance to develop empathy for others, appreciation for diversity, etc.)?
- Does the project require students to further develop and improve their work ethic (real and meaningful deadlines, problem solving, flexibility to get the work completed at the highest-possible level, etc.)?
- Should problems arise, are there structures in place to support students through healthy conflict resolution?
- Is the project work environment informed by trauma-informed practice (everyone knows each other and knows to, in the words of Plato, “Be kind for everyone is fighting a hard battle.”), restorative practice (authentic discussion is a regular part of the teaching practice and challenges are dealt with through discussion rather than punishments and rewards, except for in extreme cases) and PBIS (everyone is quick to look for and shout out the positive, appreciations are commonplace)?