

Designing Effective Projects: Planning Projects Project Ideas

Types of Projects

Projects are in-depth investigations of real-world topics and issues that are worthy for students to know and understand. They can incorporate creative role play, construction, technology, community, and various curriculum topics in order for students to learn the content and show what they know. Below are examples of projects.

- **Service learning:** These projects often involve the local community and allow students to apply lessons learned in the classroom to real-world situations. Constructing a plan to clean up the local waterways or designing a playground for the local park are some examples of service-learning projects. View a project plan that integrates service-learning: [Don't Trash the Earth](#)
- **Simulation/role play:** These projects are designed to provide students with an authentic, first-hand experience. Students role play another's persona or immerse themselves into simulated environments that recreate a certain time or place. Simulation and role play are excellent ways to reflect on history, gain multiple perspectives, or create empathy. View a project plan that integrates a simulation/role play: [Destination America: Our Hope, Our Future](#)
- **Construction and design:** These projects are based on a real-life need or can be created by a make-believe scenario. They require students to construct actual models or design plans to create solutions to authentic problems. View a project plan that integrates a construction and design element: [Go Go Gadget: Invent a Machine](#)
- **Problem-solving:** These are any projects that require students to devise solutions to real-world problems. They may include a make-believe scenario or an actual dilemma. The problems may involve a classroom or school issue, such as playground design; a community issue, like wetlands conservation; or an issue of greater scale, such as global warming. View a project plan that integrates problem-solving: [The Earth Moves Under My Feet](#)
- **Telecollaborative:** These projects are online educational tasks. They provide real-world learning experiences while collaborating online with other classes, experts, or communities. View a project plan that integrates a telecollaborative: [Wave of Spring](#)
- **WebQuest:** These are inquiry-oriented activities in which some, or all of the information that learners use comes from resources on the Internet. These projects are designed for knowledge acquisition and integration. View a project plan that integrates a WebQuest: [Enduring Heroes](#)

Types of Products and Performance Tasks

A performance task is an assessment challenge that requires a student's knowledge and skill to perform the task or create the product to show what they know. In their book, *Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook*, Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, define the following criteria for performance tasks:

- Use real or simulated settings with the kinds of constraints, background noise, incentives, and opportunities an adult would find in a similar situation
- Require students to address an identified audience
- Are based on a specific purpose that relates to the audience
- Allow students greater opportunity to personalize the task
- Are not secure; the task, criteria, and syllabus guidelines are known in advance and guide student work

Products and Performance Tasks		
Products	Reports	Historical research, scientific research, journal article for publication, policy recommendations
	Designs	Product design, home design, building or school design blueprints, transportation alternatives
	Constructions	Models, machines, exhibits, dioramas
	Essays	Letters-to-the editor, guest column for local newspaper or community publication, book and movie reviews, story writing,
	Artistic expressions	Pottery, sculpture, poetry, fine art, posters, cartoon, mural, collage, painting, song writing, movie script
Performances	Print media	Nature trail guide, self-guided walk through community history, public service announcement, history scrapbook, photo timeline, investigative documentary, commercial, training manual, animation/cartoon
	Multimedia	Informational kiosk, video, photo journal, slideshow, digital book
	Presentations	Persuasive proposal, inspiring speech, debate, informative lecture, research analysis and conclusions, newscast
	Skill demonstrations	Science laboratory processes, constructions, specific sports skills, teach or mentor younger students
	Artistic/creative performances	Interpretive dance, play, skit, character study; docu-drama, readers' theater, radio plays
	Simulations	Mock trial, reenactment of historical event, role-play