Sharing our Un-Beautiful Projects
The Six A’s of Powerful Projects

Academic Rigor
Projects address key learning standards identified by the school or district and helps students develop habits of mind and work associated with academic and professional disciplines.

Authenticity
Projects use a real world context (e.g., community and workplace problems) and address issues that matter to the students.

Applied Learning
Projects engage students in solving semi-structured problems calling for competencies expected in high-performance work organizations (e.g., teamwork, problem-solving, communication, etc.).

Active Exploration
Projects extend beyond the classroom and connect to work internships, field-based investigations, and community explorations.

Adult Connections
Projects connect students with adult mentors and coaches from the wider community.

Assessment Practices
Projects involve students in regular exhibitions and assessments of their work in light of personal, school and real-world standards of performance.
Authenticity

Projects:

Use a real world context (e.g., community and workplace problems)

Emanate from a problem that has meaning to students

Result in a product or performance that has personal and/or social value
Applied Learning

Projects:

Engage students in solving semi-structured problems

Call for competencies expected in high-performance work organizations (e.g., teamwork, problem-solving, communication)

Require students to develop organizational and self-management skills

Sangak {You}
Active Exploration

Projects:

Extend beyond the classroom

Connect to field-based investigations, community explorations, and work internships

Require real investigations using a variety of methods, media, and sources
Adult Connections

Projects:

Connect students with adult mentors and coaches from the wider community

Expose students to adults with relevant expertise

Engage adults in the design and assessment of student projects
Assessment Practices

Projects:

Provide milestones/checkpoints

Involve lots of reflection for students and teachers

Result in exhibitions and performances

Are grounded in personal, school and real-world standards of performance
Successful Projects

- Are semi-structured and allow for student input (student choice)
- Follow a timeline with articulated milestones
- Require a tangible end product
- Articulate product expectations through professional examples (teachers make a prototype)
- Use critique and revision throughout the project
- Include presentation for a real audience
- Connect students with adult mentors and professionals
- Conceive of teachers as “coaches/facilitators” and students as “workers”
- Have grade level appropriate content
Goals:

- Encouraging risk
- Cultivating collegiality
- Improving our own work
Instructions

Write down one idea for a project that you would like to do with your class this year:

• Product
• Topic
• Grade level
• Question you want answered
Norms

• Hard on the content, soft on the people
• Suspend judgment
Example Guiding Questions

• What are some natural benchmarks for this project?
• How can I give students more choice/freedom?
• What would be some good management strategies for this project?
• What can I do to make my project more challenging?
• What can I do to make this project more authentic?
• Who is the audience? Who could benefit from this?
• How could I exhibit this?
• What could I do to make the products be more professional?
• What are some resources for this project?
• How can I make this project more “sticky”? Essential question suggestions?