**Session 6: Connecting the Work to Students’ Future Work Lives**

**Objectives**

The goal of this session is to stimulate teacher thinking and collaborative discussion about how to craft meaningful projects that mirror real-world tasks. Teachers will discuss a novel approach to giving students “real-world assignments,” learn a framework to help students approach a real-life task (the 4 Ds of Problem Solving), and discuss how to use these ideas in their own teaching.

**Guiding Question**

* How can we create experiences for students that are relevant, engaging and more like the real world?

**At a Glance**

In this session teachers begin by reading an excerpt from Ted McCain’s *Teaching for Tomorrow* about presenting students with real-world problems and engaging in a silent discussion about the issues raised. They discuss ways to give students authentic tasks as assignments. The session then guides the participants through a process for how one would support students in unpacking an authentic task using the four Ds of problem-solving (Define, Design, Do and Debrief) from Ted McCain’s *Teaching for Tomorrow*. We highly recommend reading Ted McCain’s *Teaching for Tomorrow* before conducting this session.

**Facilitator Notes**

There are two versions of the PowerPoint presentation for this session – one that has examples that will resonate more with English/Social Studies teachers and one that is more aimed at Science/Technology teachers. This session presents a major shift in teaching praxis that many teachers find startling or difficult. Normally, teachers present content to students and then assign a project that deepens and assesses their learning. In this plan, students are assigned the project first, and work out a plan to complete that project – including what content they must learn in order to finish the project successfully. It is important to emphasize to teachers the importance of this flip: It is not just that a project mirrors a real-world task, but that, like in the work environment, students are presented with a task and must problem-solve how to complete it. This creates a powerful motivation for students, because students themselves have determined or discovered that they need to know a particular piece of content in order to complete their project, rather than learning content that the teacher tells them “they will need later.”

**PLAN TO ADAPT TIME FOR EACH SEGMENT DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF SESSION**

**(60-90 minutes)**

**Materials**

Large post-it notes and pens/markers

Handout 6.1 (*Teaching for Tomorrow* excerpt)

Handout 6.2 (The Four Ds)

Handout 6.3 (Authentic Assignment Ideas)

Handout 6.4 (How Often Assignments Include Authentic Tasks)

Handout 6.5 (Four Ds Student Planning Sheets [blank])

Handout 6.6 (Four Ds Examples from *Teaching for Tomorrow*)

Handout 6.7 (Teacher Reflection Questions)

**Procedure**

**Set-up:** Place poster-size sheets on each wall, labeled:

* ASSUMPTIONS
* AGREE WITH
* ARGUE WITH
* ASPIRE TO

**Introduction (3 minutes)**

Facilitator reminds participants of the overall goals of these professional development sessions: to prepare students for the real world and increase their motivation to complete assignments and take ownership of their learning. Review the guiding question for the session and explain that during the next portion of the session, they will engage in a silent conversation about one educator’s vision for preparing students for the real world.

**Silent Discussion of Excerpt from *Teaching for Tomorrow* (15 minutes)**

Ask teachers to read the excerpt from Ted McCain’s book, *Teaching for Tomorrow*, thinking about the 4 A’s: **Assumptions** the author holds, things they **agree** with, things they want to **argue** about, and things they **aspire** to. Ask them to write comments on their post-it notes and post them on the appropriate large sheet on the wall. Ask them also to read and comment on the comments of others.

In the large group debrief, ask about themes that emerged from the conversations and whether interacting with others’ opinions influenced any of their original opinions.

Then debrief on the “silent conversation” strategy as a teaching strategy for their own students (unless this has already been done sufficiently in a previous session in the series). Ask how they think it would work and what might need to be adapted or changed. Discuss how likely it is that they might use this strategy in their own classrooms.

**Discussion of Authentic Assignments (5 minutes)**

After reviewing the ways assignments can be authentic (problem, task, process, audience – see Slides 11 and 12), ask teachers to estimate how often they have given these types of assignments using handout sheet.

Ask for volunteers and/or give examples of types of authentic assignments (Slides 16-24).

**Modeling The Four Ds (15-20 minutes)**

Explain to the participants that you will walk them through the Four Ds of how to unpack the task presented to them in the same way you would do so with students in a classroom, though in an abbreviated format. Pass out Student Planning Sheets for the 4 Ds as well as the examples from the McCain book.

For each of the Four Ds, first, simply show the main question presented and have participants craft responses.

For example, the first question (for the Define stage) – “What do we need to do first to accomplish this task?” – allows participants to react and provide a variety of suggestions for how they would begin to address the task (either the website for CCFA in the Science version of PD session or the travel brochure in the Humanities version). Then, focus participants that first we need to *define* the task presented. Explain the importance of the Define phase – students, and even participants, might immediately jump to the Design or Do phase without taking the time to properly identify what is being asked and the criteria for success. Point out how this is different from typical assignments where teachers will often hand out an assignment with the task, steps and criteria already defined.

Walk participants through the next three steps in the same way: Have them respond to the general question and then focus them to consider the next phase of the Four Ds – Design, Do and Debrief.

Underscore the importance of ensuring students spend time and thought in the Define and Design phases, which are often skipped as students begin the Do phase immediately.

Provide participants with Handout 1.2 (The Four Ds) and review the four phases once more. Ask if teachers want to share any other frameworks they have used to help students tackle complex tasks. Mention the handouts that describe additional ideas for alternative assignments.

**Individual or Small Group Discussion and Share-Out on Applying Session Ideas (10-20 minutes)**

Have participants reflect on the questions on slide and handout about how to apply what they have learned in their own classrooms.