

INTERCONNECTEDNESS: IDEAS FOR PRACTICE

Try these ideas to design learning experiences that support students to see themselves and others as both individuals and members of different, intersecting communities and systems; engage with the tensions inherent in the complexities of civic belonging; and see themselves as being in reciprocal relationships with others and the natural world.



CONSIDER CONTENT

Ask yourself these questions while planning:

- What does this content have to do with interactions within/among societies, or the conditions in which people live?
- What does this content have to do with the long-term health of the natural world?
- Where in this content do I see **tensions between uniqueness and belonging? Power and equity? Self-care and stewardship? Independence and interdependence?**
- What are some **tradeoffs**, or competing priorities, related to this content or area of study, and how can I invite students to consider those?

TRY ONE THING

Routinely ask students "What people and groups have a connection to this topic? How might it look from those points of view?"



INCORPORATE ART

Build attunement to Interconnectedness by thinking with art. Here are some tips:

Select an artwork with multiple people or creatures and ask students to imagine how the scene might look from the perspectives of different characters.

Select an artwork that addresses a civic topic from a different time or place. After noticing and sharing many possible interpretations, ask students:

- "How does this artwork connect to you? To your family? To your neighborhood?"
- Ask students to consider what aspects of who they are (individually and culturally) influenced what they noticed and interpreted in the artwork. Provide examples if students are stuck (e.g. reminding them of connections they drew to prior experience, and associations they made with clothing, architecture, and other cultural symbols).

Practice thinking about the civic tensions by observing with an artwork then asking students where they see each of the concepts in a given tension (e.g. "Where do you see Independence? Where do you see Interdependence?")

LAUNCH A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INTERCONNECTEDNESS



Begin a lesson using an object, image, or short text connected to your content area. Ask students to **generate different relevant points of view**, and **how they suspect the topic might look from those perspectives**. Revisit at the end of the learning experience to ask what they would add to, subtract from, or change on the list based on what they learned.

CLOSE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INTERCONNECTEDNESS



Use **reflection** to help students find connections using prompts like:

- "What connections do you see between this lesson and your life? Your family? Your neighborhood?"
- 3Ys – Why does this matter to you? Why might it matter to people around me? Why might it matter to the world?

Create a routine to end conversations on civic topics without arriving at a consensus or closure.

Ask students, "What's a point of view you hadn't considered before?" Consider an anonymous response format.

EVERYDAY INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Extensions and suggestions for teachers, by teachers

Support healthy disagreement

- Discuss and design community agreements that **support democracy with dissent**, e.g. ask students to create processes for group decision making with steps for identifying competing desires and weighing tradeoffs. Draw on the C4 civic tensions (Power/Equity, Self-Care/Stewardship, Independence/Interdependence, Uniqueness/Belonging) to help students anticipate challenges that could arise.
- Challenge students to argue for a perspective they do not agree with to **learn how to develop opposing interpretations and reason with evidence**. Try this through a formal debate unit, or assign a “disagreement partner” with whom students can take turns arguing for different perspectives.
- Create a routine to **express and hear disagreement in ways that promote listening and respect**, e.g. a class agreement to wait a certain number of minutes before responding to criticism/disagreement.
- **Craft playful, multi-modality experiences that create low-stakes opportunities to practice difficult civic emotions**, e.g.:
 - “Step into” characters with different perspectives and needs and act out scenarios;
 - Use inexpensive materials (e.g. recyclables, aluminum foil) to represent civic challenges and interplays.

Support a classroom culture that addresses the learning and thriving of each student and of the group

- **Co-create with students a classroom governance document that articulates rights and responsibilities within the shared community**. Revisit it to co-create processes for addressing conflict and naming competing values. Explicitly discuss its power and challenges as a document to support the civic health of your micro-community.
- **Create a “portfolio of group learning,”** as a document shared with families and students, and/or on a bulletin board. Invite students to add to it periodically with prompts like “What did we learn together about...” “What disagreements came up/how did we move through them productively?” “How did we share space and materials?”
- Encourage students and families to care as much about each other’s learning as our own.
- During brainstorming and discussions, include more voices and encourage diverse points of view by using discussion protocols that emphasize listening to one another and visually capturing and displaying ideas.



Create opportunities for students to see connections among people, phenomena, and across time and place

- Ask students what **connections and comparisons they see to other people, times, and places**.
- Prompt students to **map problems and civic opportunities onto larger systems** (e.g. “Draw a map of your current understanding of this situation and include at least three surprising connections”).

Notice, name, and practice engaging with the civic tensions

- **Discuss artworks, literature, fables, etc. from different times or places in which differences in values, perspectives, worldviews, and ideologies play out**.
- Invite students to **“crack open” or tease apart the words of the civic tensions**. Either in pairs, small groups, or as a class, ask students to share their own definitions and associations with power/equity, distinctiveness/belonging, self-care/stewardship, independence/interdependence. Remind students that neither is good or bad, but that there is value in considering where the “sweet spot” might be in different situations.
- Ask students where they see these tensions in, for instance, a **news article, a work of literature, and artwork, or a situation in the community**.
- **Notice and name the common civic tensions when they arise**, reminding the group that neither aspect of the tension is good nor bad.

INVESTIGATION: IDEAS FOR PRACTICE

Try these ideas to design learning experiences that support students to slow down to better understand a civic problem; step out of our limiting mindsets to deepen understanding of the complexities of a civic problem; and observe, consider, and reason using diverse, reliable evidence



CONSIDER CONTENT

Ask yourself these questions while planning:

- How does this content connect to students and their communities? What themes, puzzles or big ideas might arise from those connections?
- What is **complex** about the content that we are exploring?
 - What are some **assumptions** or **common misconceptions** that can get in the way of understanding these topics?
 - What are some **contradictory perspectives** on this topic?
 - How has our understanding of this topic **evolved** over time?



INCORPORATE ART

Take plenty of time for students to notice and share observations among the group. Prompt students to develop many possible interpretations, each time reasoning with evidence by asking:

- “What could you point to in the artwork that makes you say that?”
- “What clues or connections from your prior experiences make you say that?”

Select an artwork that addresses a civic topic. After noticing and sharing many possible interpretations, ask,

- “What’s a simplistic, stereotypical, or one-sided interpretation of this scene? What’s a more complex one?” (Alternatively, “What’s a story someone might interpret if they just glanced at this work? What’s a more complicated story that you discovered?”)
- “Who, besides the artist, do you think would have something interesting to add to our conversation, and why?”



LAUNCH A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INVESTIGATION

Begin a lesson using a work of art, an object, or an image connected to your content area. Invite students to observe, describe, share interpretations, and point to evidence to support their theories about the art/object/image.

Juxtapose two images or phenomena that don’t typically appear together; ask what students **see**, **think**, and **wonder**.



CLOSE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INVESTIGATION

Use (anonymous or shared) **reflection** to help students see how slowing down and considering different perspectives and information **deepened their understanding**, using prompts like:

- “What’s something you heard today that surprised you, or changed how you think about the topic?”
- “What’s one thing about who you are that shaped what you noticed and thought about the topic?”
- “If we were going to explore this further, what questions should we ask? Who should we talk to?”

Use a closing “catch phrase” that sends students off with a **key idea**, such as “Stay curious,” or “Keep wondering.”

Create a routine to end conversations on civic topics without arriving at a consensus or closure.

- Ask students to share one thing relevant to the topic that they commit to remain curious about.
- Invite students to turn feelings about a topic into a doodle, movement, or sound and share out simultaneously.

TRY ONE THING

Make these phrases routine in your classroom:

“What’s complex (or ‘complicated’) about this?”

“What makes you say that?”

“How would this look from different points of view?”

EVERYDAY INVESTIGATION

Suggestions for teachers, by teachers

Encourage noticing & complexity

- Create opportunities routines to **slow down and observe**, such as:
 - “Show and Ask,” in which students bring in interesting objects and classmates raises questions about them
 - Slow noticing with primary sources, such as objects from nature, artworks, news photographs, graphics relevant to your content. Prompt students to observe and share what they notice and think and exchange ideas with others.
 - “New view” exercises in which students consider a familiar place or object through changing their physical perspective—worm’s eye view, upside down—and draw or describe from their new perspective.
- **Develop student understandings of complexity** as an important concept across disciplines and in life beyond school:
 - Create opportunities for students to notice parts of wholes (e.g. take apart objects, look at how the pieces work together, consider what would happen if one were missing or different; then try the same with a concept you are covering in class)
 - Co-create definitions of Complexity (e.g. use a thinking routine or prompt like “what comes to mind when you hear this word; **connect the abstract idea of “complexity” to tangible, familiar concepts**, like objects with a lot of different pieces that fit together in complicated ways)
- **Create a question collection at the beginning, middle, and end of a unit or topic.** Invite students to notice how their questions change as they learn more. Celebrate increases in the number and complexity of questions.
- Use the space in the classroom or hallway to **keep track of civic opportunities and their complexities** and connections, such as:
 - Transform a bulletin board into an “**Opportunity Wall**” where students post things they believe raise questions about fairness, beauty, and sustainability, such as news headlines, pictures of their neighborhoods or schools, and more.
 - Create a routine to “**Capture and Complexify**” **problems/opportunities** in which students select a group-identified problem/opportunity and map connections, causes, consequences, and questions that arise.

Recognizing & challenging assumptions

- Ask students what they **think** they know about a topic, or what stories they have been told about it. Highlight and explore tensions in the beliefs.
- **Model questioning your own assumptions and share your “Aha!” moments.**
- Challenge students to argue for a perspective they do not agree with to learn how to develop opposing interpretations and reason with evidence.
- Ask for predictions of how others, such as friends, adults, or people in other cultures, might respond to a question. Have students check predictions against actual responses.

Building critical literacy around information and ways of knowing

- Invite students to critically consider sources of information, with prompts like, “**Who counts as an expert?** What types of experts do we think would have important insights on this, and what makes us say that? **How can we determine whether information is trustworthy?**”
- Invite students to reflect on what might account for different perspectives on a matter, and to look for reasoning behind claims.



Accounting for social & emotional dimensions of civic matters

- **Destigmatize assumptions** by acknowledging that we all carry them, and that we can expand and complement our perspectives together.
- Create a “Pause & Ponder” routine to stop and ask (without judgment), “**What assumptions are we making about this [situation/person/story/group]?**”

IMAGINATION: IDEAS FOR PRACTICE

Try these ideas to design learning experiences that support students to recognize what is unjust or unsustainable about our current reality; collectively imagine how that reality could be otherwise; craft shared directions toward the future as a community, incorporating many perspectives



CONSIDER CONTENT

Ask yourself these questions while planning:

- Where do issues of fairness and sustainability show up in this content? How does this content connect to students' communities and futures? Who else is involved in, or impacted by, this topic? How can we bring in diverse perspectives?
- What do professionals in this field think about this topic? What do my students and I know? Where are the spaces of overlap or tension? How could my students and I find this out together?
- How has the current knowledge of what we are studying changed over time? How are professionals in this field still testing and questioning this knowledge today? What strong feelings (e.g. passion, outrage, sympathy, a desire for personal expression) are held by experts in the field and/or others?

TRY ONE THING

Regularly use the language of possibility (“**what if,**” “**...yet,**” “**might,**” “**what could this be like**”), experimentation (“**let’s try it and see,**” “**works in progress**”), and collaboration (“**weave together our ideas,**” “**yes, and,**” “**borrow and riff on what we hear**”)



INCORPORATE ART

Expand imagination, C4 thinking, and interest in building ideas with one another through experiences with art:

Select an artwork that depicts a scene with people and/or the natural environment. After noticing and sharing many possible interpretations, ask,

- “What in this artwork is similar to, and different from, the community or world we live in? Your ideal world?”
- “What could you add, subtract, or change to make this scene more fair, healthy, or beautiful for the people connected to the story, and/or better for the long-term well-being of the natural world?”

Select an artwork that addresses a civic topic. After noticing and sharing many possible interpretations, ask,

- “What challenges faced by people and the world does this raise? Where else have you noticed these issues?”
- “What would you want to add, subtract, or change to make this scene more just? Healthier for the earth?”

Encourage idea exchange with prompts like “What did you hear from classmates that changed your thinking?”



LAUNCH A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH IMAGINATION

Set a tone for out-of-the-box thinking by viewing a fantastical, surprising, powerful, or absurd image, such as an invention, design solution, discovery, or a surprising view of something (e.g. from a microscope).

Start with a creativity challenge: an evocative, open-ended prompt with tight parameters (e.g. Take 4 minutes, using only aluminum foil, create something you hope everyone will have in the future but that doesn’t exist yet).



CLOSE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH IMAGINATION

Use reflection time (or an exit ticket) to encourage idea exchange and/or connect to the C4 purposes of fairness, beauty, and sustainability, using prompts such as:

- What’s an idea you heard from someone else that made your thinking stronger?
- Thinking about what we learned today, or the experiences we had today, where did you see an opportunity for a better world? Where did you see fairness, beauty, or care for the world?

EVERYDAY IMAGINATION

Suggestions for teachers, by teachers

Nurture a classroom culture of asking “what if,” thinking outside of the box, and thinking with one another

- **Celebrate and encourage unusual and bold ideas** (ex: Have students generate many ideas before pursuing any single one; encourage them to generate types of ideas such as Big/Bold Ideas, Doable-Now Ideas, Unique-to-Me Ideas, etc.).
- **Practice and name idea generation in a variety of contexts** so that students build foundational skills to envision new, different possibilities (ex: Loosen students up with silly or surprising prompts, like those involving animals, fantastical creatures or situations, or the worst way to address a given problem).
- **Create opportunities for students to express ideas for the future in multiple modalities** (e.g. Rebuild, repair, and reimagine with play such as making a “smash house,” a structure meant to be torn down and rebuilt better, or a tear-up collage).
- **Build mid-point breaks in which students share works in progress**, either in a full group or in pairs, and **listen for others’ ideas they want to borrow, remix, or incorporate** into their own work.



Support students to notice and track examples of fairness, beauty, and sustainability in civic spaces

- **Co-create with students shared, evolving understandings of fairness, beauty, and sustainability** by asking students what the concepts look and feel like in different civic spaces and relationships (ex: in the schoolyard, between neighbors, in relationships among countries), e.g. “What does fairness feel like during recess?” or “In a typical day in our lives, what happens that relates to the long-term health and viability of the natural world?”
- **Take “noticing strolls,” walks around the classroom, school, or neighborhood** to deliberately look for things you haven’t noticed before. Instruct students to keep track of problems they can see and invisible problems they can feel. Instruct students to also keep track of solutions they see (ex: ramps at street corners, murals).
- **Ask students to “Imagine a World” with prompts of “less, more, eliminate, create.”**
- **Invite students to surface, make visible, and revisit what they see as wrong or broken**, (ex: a “Concern Map” or “Unfair Museum”) **or to showcase ideas they have for making the world better** (ex: a “World’s Fair of the Future”).

Support students to feel, not simply think about, what is unfair or unhealthy about a situation

- **Challenge students to represent a civic problem or possibility through movement or sound**, e.g. “Imagine yourself as one of the characters in this situation. Show us with your body language and facial expressions how you might feel” or “In groups, use your bodies to create a tableau of how this problem looks now, and then to transform it into a solution.”
- Invite students to help you find and share evocative artwork (including music and popular media) where artists address social issues or reimagine the world. **Ask students to freewrite or freedraw about feelings the work evokes.**
- **Use narrative accounts (e.g. StoryCorps, TED Talks) to introduce students to multi-faceted personal experiences that differ from their own.** Remind students that every person is unique, and a member of groups, and to be cautious about generalizing from a single story.

Promote a sense that change is possible, and that it is driven by the collaborative vision and action of regular people

- Share examples of changes in different times and places. Ask students to consider and/or research the “**biography of an idea/movement**” in which they unearth the steps, ingredients, and conditions that led to what we know today.
- Combat the “lone genius” myth when discussing innovators, historical figures, and movements by wondering and researching with students, asking, “**where might this idea have come from?** Who and what else might be involved?”

INFLUENCE: IDEAS FOR PRACTICE

Try these ideas to design learning experiences that support students as they consider the change they want to see, determine what is actionable, compelling, and strategic promising within various spheres of influence; seek to understand how they are influenced; and transform a vision into authentic and meaningful action.



CONSIDER CONTENT

Ask yourself these questions while planning:

- What opportunities does this topic present for students to take action in the present moment? What could students create and share with others to explore this topic and/or demonstrate understanding?
- Where in this content can we see how people have translated ideas into impact? Where and how is this content changing now, or likely to change in the future?

TRY ONE THING

Create frequent opportunities for students to prototype solutions to real or fantastical problems and share their creations beyond the classroom.



INCORPORATE ART

Practice recognizing Influence and its complexities by thinking with art. Here are some tips:

Select art that does not overtly address a social issue, as contemporary civic issues can be difficult to discuss directly in constructive ways.

After providing students plenty of time to notice and share many possible interpretations, ask:

- Who or what in this scene is powerful? Powerless? What makes you say that? What kinds of power might be held by the one you thought was powerless? Who or what exerts power over the one you identified as powerful?

Select an artwork that addresses a civic topic from a different time and/or place.

After noticing and sharing many possible interpretations, ask:

- What do you think the artist cares about in this work? What do you think the artist might want viewers to care about or think? How does that relate to your thoughts about this topic?
- What big ideas does this artwork make you think of? Where have you seen these big ideas/these issues in school? The world today? What's a change you would want to see on this contemporary/local manifestation of this issue?

LAUNCH A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INFLUENCE



Start the experience with a creativity challenge that calls on students to translate an idea into a tangible product. Celebrate the leap from idea to tangible creation even if the outcome is not what the student expected.

Ask students to think in advance about how the group can share what they learn with others.

CLOSE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH INFLUENCE



Use reflection time (or an exit ticket) to connect learning to action and support students as able to make an impact, using prompts like:

“What’s something from today that you want to share with someone else? Who? Why?”

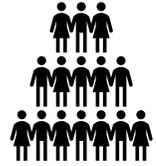
“What do we want to do differently based on what we thought and felt today?”

EVERYDAY INFLUENCE

Extensions and suggestions for teachers, by teachers

Celebrate, encourage, and build awareness of idea exchange

- Listen to students and **raise up moments when they are learning from each other**.
- Ask students to **collect one idea** from someone else to incorporate into their work.
- Ask students, **“Who should hear this? What would we want them to learn? How can we get their attention?”**



Encourage students to see their roles, power, and potential for impact within and beyond school walls

- When students are excited about an issue or opportunity (even if it doesn't seem “very important” to you), prompt them to think about **why it matters to them, who else it might matter to, and how they might share it**.
- **Invite students to help make classroom rules** or to edit existing rules to make them more fair.
- **Create a class Asset bank:** Invite students to keep a running inventory of their talents, skills, and interests. Be specific and list as many as they can think of. Post your asset bank somewhere students can see it.

Engage students in both playful and authentic problem solving

- Use whimsical creativity challenges to **create fun, low-intimidation opportunities to turn ideas into creations that can be shared with others**. For instance, start with a civic space that students are familiar with, such as a school, playground, or library, and challenge them to design such a space for magical creatures or animals.
- **Invite students to help problem solve a challenge you are grappling with**. Use questions from **Investigation** to help students identify roots and complexities of the problem and prompts from **Imagination** help students envision possibilities that go beyond their own perspectives.

Encourage thinking that is grounded in problem analysis (draws on Investigation) and also thinking that is fresh, surprising, and bold (draws on Imagination)

- **Celebrate unconventional ideas**, e.g. share unusual inventions, social innovations, artist projects and other creative approaches to the world; listen for them in the news or search the internet (get started with terms like ‘social entrepreneurship examples,’ ‘creative inventions,’ ‘unusual public art’).
- **Recognize and name that innovation and transformative ideas are initially strange and often unpopular**.
- **Connect students back to principles of Investigation** with language such as, “What does this have to do with the root causes? What impacts might this have on other people? How does your idea account for the complexities you identified?”
- **Encourage students to think about what makes an action or product effective** with questions like, “What does this (invention) do, and what makes you say that? Who or what will be different as a result of this, why is that important, and how would we know? What doesn't this idea account for?” Pose these questions as students develop their own ideas for impact or as they study inventions or actions of others.

Design experiences that enable students to develop and execute an idea that makes an authentic impact on something they care about

- **Ask students to think about “spheres” or levels of influence** to help students break down intimidating plans into tasks they can make visible progress on. Try questions like “What do you have direct and indirect power over? Who listens to you, and who listens to them?” to help students see the power they have and manage their energy around things that are out of their control. Help them brainstorm manageable actions they might take in: 1) their own personal context, (e.g., a dinner table conversation with family); 2) their local (neighborhood, classroom, grade level, or school) context; or 3) more widely (e.g., using the internet or partnerships with wide-reaching organizations).
- Engage students with the question **“What do I want to be different as a result of what I do? Who will this impact? What will the impact look like for the relevant people? How will I know the impact when I see it?”**
- **Help students see progress along the way**, celebrate what was achieved, and think about what they might want to try next.