Instruction

Designing Sessions (CP20)

At XP, Teachers collaboratively design sessions which challenge, engage and empower our students. Sessions are the lifeblood of our practice and our students' daily experiences. Teachers carefully craft sequences of sessions that build understanding and tailor them to the diverse needs of our students. The common components and considerations across disciplines exist as a point of equity, and enable simple structures which simplify what is a highly complex task and allow for complex output. Sessions are designed around the intended learning, rather than designing lessons using activities as a starting point. Through ongoing professional development teachers develop a range of session formats so that they can attune content and skills to appropriate session models. The design of sessions at XP is an intentional and deliberate process.

Common features of session design exist across all of our settings, however the application of them varies across subject disciplines, sequences of sessions, and key stages:

Common considerations when designing sessions

There are a number of considerations that teachers must make when planning sessions centred around the 4Ts:

Target: What is the intended learning for the session? Which standards are to be studied? How are these standards best taught and learned?

Topic: How does the session fit into the case study or sequence of sessions, contributing to the guiding question? What are the big ideas for or the stories that we are telling through the session? What are the connections from this session to previous sessions/other disciplines?

Text: What texts will students engage with in the session?

Task: How can we match the activities to intended learning? How can we scaffold / differentiate to challenge and support all students? How can students engage with the learning and demonstrate success? What assessment practices could be used to determine student success?

Common components of sessions

Regardless of the session format, all sessions contain common structures to engage, build curiosity and encourage student thinking in an active classroom.

'Do nows' are designed to achieve one or more of the following aims:

- **Activate** schema, linking students to prior learning.
- **Ignite** students' curiosity.
- **Check** understanding or proficiency in previously learned content or skills.
- **Create** purpose for the session.

Clear learning targets – In our primary schools, these targets are designed around TGBs (To Get Better at) and revolve around challenging 'gold targets' for secure outcomes, and 'green targets' for excellent outcomes. At Secondary, DLTs (Daily Learning Targets) are linked to long term learning targets, and subject specific standards that underpin the expedition.

Nevertheless, both approaches revolve around:

- **Unpacking** the academic and HoWL learning targets for the session.
- **Checking** for understanding.
- **Ensuring** that students can visualise what success will look like.
- **Reminding** students how this learning target fits into the story of the expedition through connection to case studies or the guiding question.

Increasing student independence - Through active participation and discussion, students are given opportunities to demonstrate their increasing mastery of new content or skills.

'Debriefs' consolidate and synthesise learning with a focus on:

- **What?** What has been learned, what were the big ideas? How was it learned? What connections can be made to the case study, guiding question or to other disciplines? How can we make sure that we remember and internalise what \ we have learned?
- **So what?** Why is this learning important? How successful have we been in our learning?
- **What next?** How can this learning help us to answer the guiding question? How can it help us to be activist or to lead our own learning? What comes next in our case study and the story of our expedition?

At XP, deliberate and thoughtful session design, starting with the intended learning target, engenders students to produce high quality work. Carefully crafted lessons enable students to work collaboratively, develop great habits of work and learning, and to take responsibility for, and leadership of, their own learning.

Delivering Sessions (CP21)

At XP, Teachers deliver sessions which challenge, engage and empower our students. At the heart of our sessions lies teacher discernment. Teachers develop a repertoire of the structures outlined in CP21, and plan for their effective use. Teachers gather information from their students all of the time and reflect on how best to proceed during sessions. However, the structures and practices[9] outlined below can only be effective if they are implemented in a classroom culture built on positive relationships. Teachers at XP ensure that they establish purpose for their sessions and welcome curiosity, celebrate mistakes, recognise diverse views, reward creativity, and encourage thoughtful and high quality responses from their students.

Underpinning effective delivery of sessions are a set of interconnected structures that help teachers to plan and deliver effective and purposeful sessions through:

Creating purpose and orienting the session within a series of sessions, case studies or wider expeditions so that students can make connections across disciplines, time and place and are invested in their learning.

Building curiosity so that students 'need to know' and are engaged in their learning.

Differentiation of session content, processes and the classroom environment in order to support and challenge all learners.

Managing the active classroom so that students feel safe, develop great habits and know what to expect through consistent routines and practices.

Discussion protocols that give all students a voice, help them to determine importance and encourage thoughtful responses.

Asking students to represent their thinking in a variety of forms to show their increasing mastery of learning targets.

Checking for understanding strategies* that give teachers information about students' learning, identify misconceptions and help teachers to adjust the flightpath of the session.

Ongoing student-engaged assessment practices that build student ownership of learning, focus students on reaching standards-based learning targets, and drive achievement.

A relentless focus on quality. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, reflection, critique, rubrics, and work with experts. Through revising and redrafting their responses in service of the creation of beautiful work, students come to value craftsmanship and quality.

Reflecting upon and debriefing learning so that content is consolidated and synthesised, students' work and Habits of Work and Learning are honoured, and so that students can place their learning in the bigger picture of the expedition, guiding question or case study.

There are some elements of all session delivery that are so fundamental to our approach that some of these are core practices in their own right (see Core Practices 20-23).

At XP, teachers develop a repertoire of practices to deliver sessions that promote equity and engage students in grappling with challenging content. This ensures that students are invested in their own and their peers' learning and push each other to produce high quality work.

Managing the Active Classroom Protocols (MITAC)[7] (CP22)

Effective classroom management does not revolve around the power of a teacher's personality. Instead, It revolves around deliberate and intentional adult behaviour, which in turn helps to facilitate habitual student behaviours. The consistent structures and routines provided by the teacher help students to feel safe. Teachers have an unconditional positive regard for their students and their development.

Our high behavioural and academic expectations that we have for all of our students are achieved through a combination of our emphasis on promoting good behaviour, making 'deposits and withdrawals' with students and parents, excellent relationships, and a series of management in the active classroom protocols.

Management in the active classroom (MITAC) revolves around a set of management tools that create engaged and motivated students. Instead of compliance, students become motivated by their aspiration to influence the world around them, to make their families proud and to become the best versions of themselves. This is achieved within our wider culture of Crew - a sense of belonging and students feeling safe. Nevertheless, MITAC protocols act as the strategies and frameworks in which to embed the necessary habits and routines to facilitate this:

Teacher presence: This revolves around where an adult stands, their use of eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, managing one's emotions etc all play an important part in managing the active classroom. The setting up of the classroom environment with specific student roles and responsibilities, habits and routines also accompanies the intentional adult behaviour around MITAC.

Norms: The creation of class norms and connecting them to school wide norms help adults to create a safe and supportive environment for our children. The co-creation of norms help to facilitate the feeling that 'we are all in this together', and act as a guide for 'how things are around here' - enabling adults to promote good behaviour, and challenge those where expectations are not being met.

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Routines: The first 5 and last 5 minutes of a lesson provide the essential building blocks for purposeful ends and starts to sessions.. Classroom Crews support this process when children are given specific responsibilities for distributing and collecting resources, tidying spaces and enabling adults to monitor all interactions during busy periods. Meeting and greeting, effective 'Do Nows', brief emotional check-ins, well managed transitions, consolidating key learning points etc., all contribute to the active ingredients of these phases.

Communication: Intentional verbal and non verbal communication centres around knowing and understanding our children really well. Employing communication strategies around transitions, challenging low level disruption, positively reinforcing good behaviour etc contribute to the effective management of our classrooms. Facilitating critique and feedback protocols help to immerse our children in environments that support one another's efforts as they strive for excellence.

Deeper support for challenging behaviours: preventing challenging behaviour and responding to any instances of behaviour that undermines authority and respect are explored in this section of MITAC.

At XP, management in the active classroom supports adults by building repertoires, exploring scenarios, developing good habits and routines, developing culture, promoting good behaviour and planning for potential explosive situations. It is developed alongside the spirit of staff Crew: understanding that we all need support with the varied eventualities in our classrooms, and by learning from one another we can facilitate high quality learning experiences.

Using Discussion Protocols (CP23)

Discussion protocols empower our teachers and students by creating a common set of classroom structures that give all students a voice, promote meaningful dialogue, engagement and expectation across all of our classrooms. They help us to realise the togetherness of 'We are Crew, not passengers'.

Discussion protocols allow our teachers to move at pace, provide thinking time, reshape responses and embed habitual routines that breeds familiarity and therefore high levels of engagement.

In essence, such protocols:

encourage students to show understanding, self-assessment, or readiness for a task, or respond to a standard prompt one at a time, or in rapid succession around the room

provide students with the time to think, listen to other contributions and to add ideas/opinions on a topic

promote a classroom culture of respect by enabling students to be sensitive to the timing of their own responses in relation to the contribution of others. collaboratively engage with a text or topic, and to recognize and articulate their own ideas before considering the ideas of others

provide a series of prompts or ideas, agree or respectfully disagree with comments.

debrief activities that allow students to verbally discuss responses

provide opportunities to think deeply and have the space to respond to the thoughts of others in a calm and thoughtful way

generate discussion and allow teachers to address misconceptions or gaps in learning

ask questions of students who may be reluctant to contribute and to target questioning so that answers are not dominated by a minority of students.

devise strategies to ensure that everyone contributes.

[7] This core practice is based, and draws, on the the EL publication: '*Management in the Active Classroom*' (Second Edition) by Berger, Strasser, Woodfin (2015)

Whether it be an opportunity to revise classroom norms, the need to circle up to revisit the importance of respect during sessions, or thoughtfully responding to classroom debates via sign language, discussion protocols bring a sense of familiarity that enables students to engage in powerful conversations.

The structure of discussion protocols often provides an additional period of thinking time for students leading to greater engagement and deeper reflection that some teachers may neglect to build into their practice. Such protocols also help to facilitate a no opt out culture amongst students where appropriate during discussions, whilst teachers ensure this is low risk by developing this practice alongside the careful cultivation of good habits so that students are typically kind, helpful and specific. Whatever the protocol, the underlying clarity that results from this practice brings a sense of security and appropriate challenge to sessions; and contributes to establishing a safe classroom culture where everyone's voice is heard, respected and valued.

Using Checking For Understanding Protocols (CP24)

Checking for understanding is the backbone of effective instruction. The checking of important ideas and concepts helps instructors gauge what students are getting and what they need to work on more. It provides instant, useful feedback to the teacher to track learning and adapt instruction to better meet the needs of students swiftly. Continually checking all students' levels of understanding throughout each session sends the message that everyone's thinking is important and necessary and therefore encourages active engagement of all.

Teachers use a range of checking for understanding strategies. Strategies take a range of forms and include:

protocols to challenge students further and determine the depth of understanding

entry tickets that ensure learning is accurately pitched for all students

exit tickets and independent 'prove it tasks' that show understanding and indicate if further instruction is required
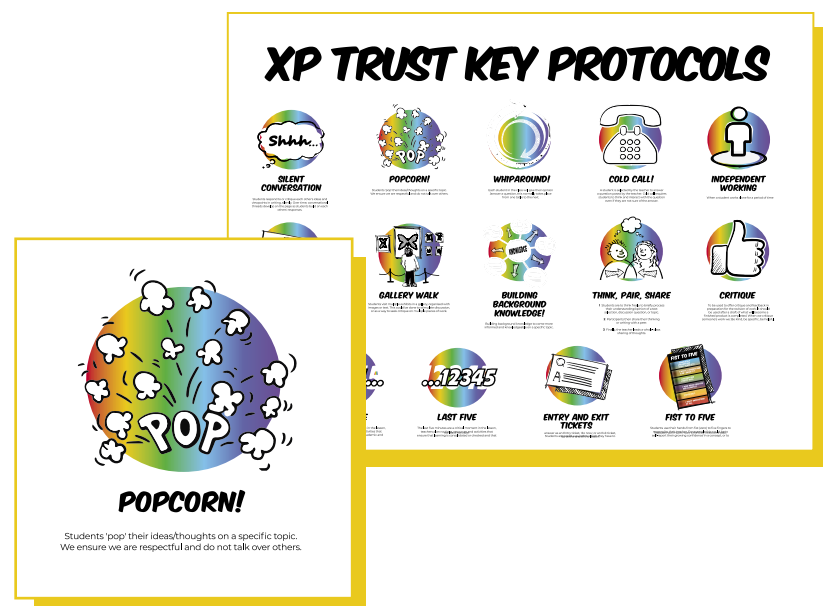
critique using 'I notice, I praise, I wonder'. Teacher, student (self) and peer critique is kind, specific and helpful

strategically listening to students' discussions and collaborative work, intervening to support, challenge and accelerate learning.

Representing Thinking

These representations are a scaffold, and learning aid, that support students during sessions, promoting independence and encouraging students to lead their own learning. These representations of thinking give students and teacher an opportunity to see thinking on the page and give staff a route into assessing the level of student understanding.

- Students use expedition work books, journals, portfolios and digital portfolios.
- Teachers and students produce sites and blogs to present on-going expeditionary learning.
- Teachers create anchor charts and select deliberate/specific protocols to publicly synthesise student understanding and to provide the class with a resource for student learning.

XP TRUST KEY PROTOCOLS

SILENT CONVERSATION

POPCORN!

WHIPAROUND!

COLD CALL!

INDEPENDENT WORKING

GALLERY WALK

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE!

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

CRITIQUE

LAST FIVE

ENTRY AND EXIT TICKETS

FIST TO FIVE

POPCORN!

Students 'pop' their ideas/thoughts on a specific topic. We ensure we are respectful and do not talk over others.

Reflecting and Debriefing

There is not one right way to debrief. Each group is different and requires unique creativity, compassion, boldness and honesty.

Debriefing consists of one or more of the six strands:

- Teachers and students use debriefing as a tool to **assess** how well the pupils have engaged with the session
- Teachers and students use debriefing as a form of **consolidation** and an **application** opportunity to apply their skills into a unseen context
- Teachers and students use debriefing as an opportunity to **summarise** learning and **predict** upcoming content based on their understanding of the session they have just taken part in.
- Teachers and students use debriefing as a **celebration** of learning.

Structuring, Redrafting and Revision of work

- Teachers capitalise on opportunities to encourage revision and redrafting of work to improve the quality of students' responses. For example verbal responses are challenged by the teacher to be more fluent, using target language or full standard English.
- Critique, redrafting and revision of work is structured in sessions. Models are provided for students so that they can visualise and name what excellence looks and sounds like. Teachers provide frameworks for critique, always framing the critique with the norms: about the work not the person, kind/specific/helpful and step up/step back.
- Teachers ask questions that provide a sharp focus on one aspect of a learning target or quality criteria. In particular for peer to peer critique, teachers narrow the focus of critique so that students are equipped to provide useful feedback. Teachers always monitor the quality of peer to peer feedback and intervene when necessary.
- Target academic language is taught explicitly so that students have an academic vocabulary for critique. Students use a common language of 'I notice', 'I wonder', 'I praise' and 'I suggest'.
- Teachers encourage students to reflect on these processes and 'critique the critique'. Students see the value in habitually redrafting their work as they experience success and high quality work as a consequence of these structures.

Checking for understanding via protocols such as questioning, use of exit tickets and critique, enables teachers to gauge learning and respond accordingly.

Whether it be the intention to probe for misconceptions, consolidate key points or even reteach key aspects of a session, swift responses allow students to stay on track and not stray away from the intended outcomes. Implementing the strategies in this core principle ensures that all students are fully engaged in this crucial process.

Adaptive Teaching (CP25)

At XP Trust adaptive teaching links inextricably to our design principle of equity. We believe that students should not be separated or grouped by academic ability but can, and must, learn together. As a result, all of our sessions are taught in mixed ability groupings where students learn together regardless of their ability. Adaptive Teaching is, therefore, of paramount importance in our planning and delivery of sessions so that we consider and adapt resources and instruction, where necessary, to meet the range of needs in our classrooms.

Whether teachers adapt the content, the process, the product or the learning environment, effective adaptive teaching sees teachers:

understand student's strengths and weaknesses in learning through ongoing assessment so that instruction can be tailored to meet the individual needs of a student

know student's interests to support engagement in learning

identify student readiness for a particular concept, skill or task

develop respectful tasks which provide appropriate challenge and foster engagement

use flexible groupings which allow for fluidity in response to ongoing assessment

embed ongoing assessment and adjustment to allow for progress of all students

adapt the process not the content or product allowing all students to achieve equitably.

As one of our curriculum seams is 'diversity and belonging' it is a cultural imperative that we respect difference and foster inclusivity. One of the ways we do this is by promoting equity through adaptive teaching and learning.

Transitory Displays (CP26)

At XP, we are committed to using transient displays and visual models to enhance the progressive learning experience for students. We co-construct with students a picture of the learning expedition through displaying work so that we can viscerally show the accumulation, and capture, key knowledge to build an understanding, and mastery of, learning targets. Student learning is displayed to represent the progressive nature of learning through case studies and is useful in facilitating links between subject disciplines. In addition, active displays provide, and can be used as, a valuable resource that can be referenced and referred back to by students as they answer the guiding question. These displays are often reflective of student thought processes and they exist not as beautifully curated work but as beautiful representations of students grappling, constructing and reflecting on key concepts, ideas and knowledge. Active displays are purposefully transient and once the expedition has been completed they are removed in readiness for the next learning expedition.

The use of transient displays can take a variety of forms but typically in a classroom you would see displayed so that it can be referenced and used interactively:

Long Term Learning Targets

The guiding question for the expedition

Case Study titles

And co-constructed work that links to the above such as the display of:

Anchor charts

Building Background Knowledge charts

Calendars and key dates

Graphic organisers

Learning and pictures from fieldwork and engagement with experts

Model student responses

Examples of model product

Transient display work in classrooms is primarily to support students through the current learning expedition. Displays are used as a resource to further engage students by providing a visual, and interactive, prompt to consolidate, reinforce and connect their learning.