



Learning by Design : Being clear about the
Design Purpose.*

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Design Purpose

** Learning by Design is a theory of teaching and learning and a pedagogical framework developed by
Prof. Mary Kalantzis and Prof. Bill Cope of the University of Illinois*

Dialogue is at the heart of Learning by Design.

Engaging in a Design Dialogue means collaborating, working together...

On the following pages are a series of questions, reflective prompts and provocations to help you clarify and articulate your Design Purpose.

To make the most of these questions and prompts - to make them more than just words on a page - we recommend that you work around a table with big sheets of butchers paper and marker pens; sit together with at least one other person or the people with whom you are designing; and really wrestle with these questions and prompts.

The aim is to foster a design dialogue, to think through your ideas, and to formulate them into a springboard for a powerful design for learning.

Begin by clarifying the purpose of your design...



Design Dialogue

Being clear about the Design Purpose is at the heart of the design process.

This means being clear about:

(1) the Learning Purpose;

(2) the Big Ideas you want the learners to understand and to be confident articulating and expressing;

(3) the Guiding Questions you want learners to explore, discuss and respond to - questions which will promote engagement, provoke and challenge learners to think, and encourage them to stretch into and shape their future selves; and

(4) the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) which you want your design to address.

The combination of these four elements will give your design a clear purpose, focus and direction as well as the gravitational pull to bring all learners along on the journey.

We first need to be clear about the purpose of the learning...



Design Purpose

The Learning Purpose is the unifying idea which holds the design together. If you are clear about your learning purpose your design will be more coherent - learners will be less likely to become lost in the learning...

Some questions to consider, discuss and respond to:

What is the purpose of the learning? What do we want learners to know * know-how * know-why * question * pull-apart * explore * critique * test * debunk * achieve * demonstrate * perform?

Why is this purpose important: to you? to the learners? to the school?

How will achieving this purpose help learners to participate more fully and more meaningfully in society? Or in some future workplace? Or in the classroom? Or in the playground? Or at home?

How will it help learners to be better citizens or better people? Or better learners?

How will you and the learners know this purpose has been achieved? Achievement needs to be visible.

How will learners be transformed by the learning?

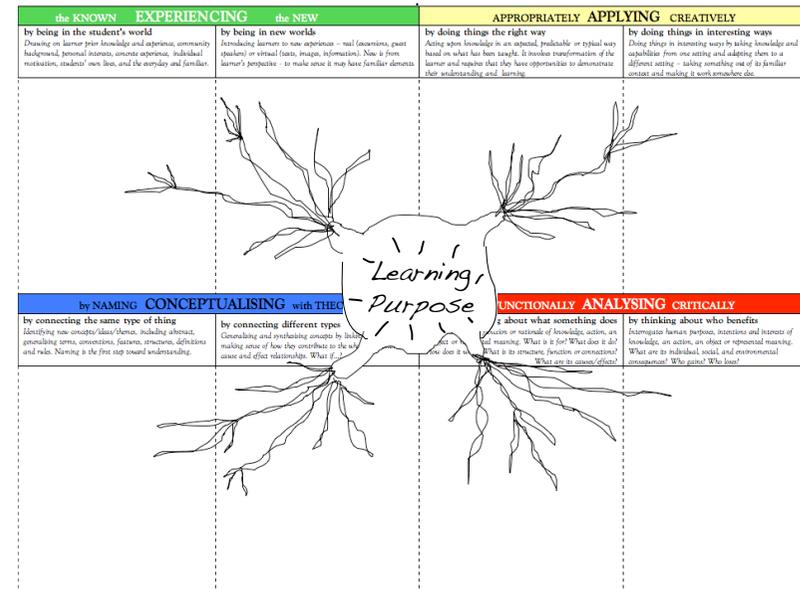
What signs of understanding and transformation will you be looking for progressively and at the end?

How will this design-purpose stretch the learners and you professionally?

How will achieving this purpose affect you?

You could begin with a 'stem' like this:

By the end of this design our learners will...



(1.) Learning Purpose

Big Ideas are the crucial concepts and theories you want learners to understand and to be confident articulating and expressing for themselves - they may be specified in the school curriculum or in VELS.

Big Ideas exist primarily in the domain of Conceptualising, which is where learners may first learn about them, however their meaning, consequences and implications are more likely to be explored and discussed via the Analysing Knowledge Processes - this is where learners are challenged to think about purpose and function and develop critical points of view about the Big Ideas.

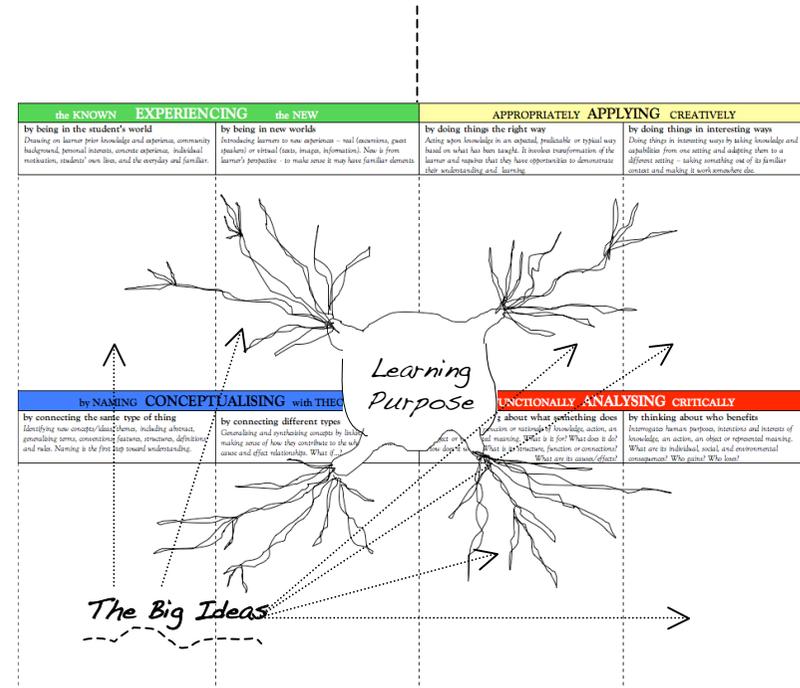
Big Ideas may also be explored via the Experiencing Knowledge Processes, and learner understanding, once developed, can be demonstrated and performed via the Applying Knowledge Processes. Big Ideas provide the content focus for your design - aim for no more than two or three otherwise the focus may be fuzzy.

So, what are the Big Ideas that give meaning and focus to our Design Purpose? Are there Big Ideas in the school curriculum or VELS which we need to address?

What is the discipline content focus of our design? What discipline or subject knowledge do we really want our learners to understand?

A deep understanding of which Big Ideas associated with our Design Purpose will provide learners with invaluable knowledge and skills?

If you have more than 2 or 3 Big Ideas whittle them back - subsidiary concepts and ideas can be picked up in your Conceptualising Learning Objectives.



(2.) Big Ideas

Guiding Questions are questions which your design will equip learners to explore, discuss and respond to in depth. Some of your questions should be provocative and challenging - this will give your design drive and impetus and will encourage learners to think deeply about, and engage critically with the Big Ideas.

Well-crafted guiding questions ensure learners are stretched and challenged to think.

Guiding Questions can open up the territory that you want to explore with your learners - they can provide learning impetus in all the Knowledge Processes - you may want to write guiding questions which map directly to them (or not).

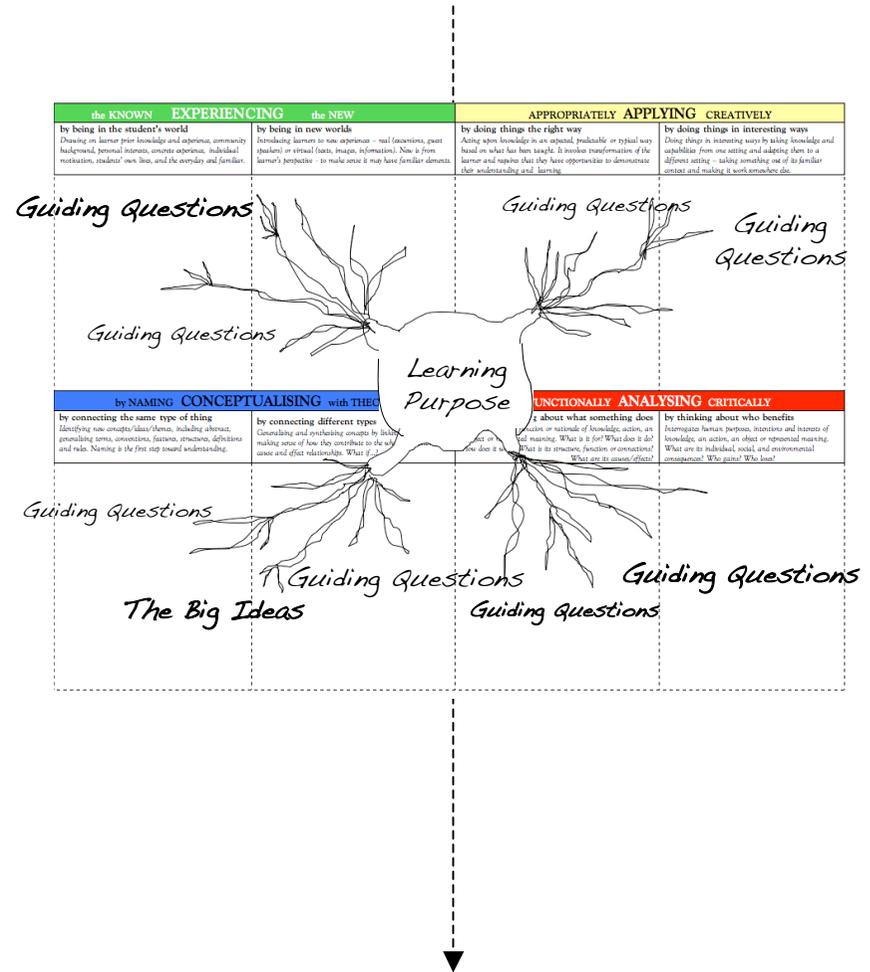
Which important questions do you want learners to think about, discuss and respond to?

Think of questions which will encourage learners to explore key concepts and ideas, their meaning, significance, consequences and implications.

Make a list of such questions. Use your Learning Purpose and Big Ideas to help you generate them.

Begin your questions with a variety of question stems - questions that begin with 'what' or 'which' are more likely to point to concepts and to naming and identifying; questions that begin with 'how' and 'why' are more likely to prompt explanation, analysis and deeper thinking. A mix of question stems is also useful when exploring how learners might apply what they have learned.

Make sure you have a good mix of question stems, what, where and particularly how and why...



(3.) Guiding Questions

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards require teachers to work through three strands of learning:

- *Physical, personal and social learning;*
- *Discipline-based learning; and*
- *Interdisciplinary learning.*

Locating your design purpose in relation to VELS will provide the design with important system anchor-points and help you sharpen your design focus.

Some questions and prompts to consider:

Which specific VELS will this design address? Use the work you have done developing your Learning Purpose, Big Ideas and Guiding Questions to locate and identify your VELS anchor-points.

How might you incorporate standards from all three VELS strands into your design?

If your design is to have a strong discipline-based learning focus is this focus reflected in your Learning Purpose, Big Ideas and Guiding Questions?

How might you incorporate the VELS standards and progression points into the design of your assessment tasks? How will you track students' progress along these points throughout the learning - formative assessment as-you-go - as well as at the end?

Now is the time to review the four elements of your Design Purpose - you should have a clear idea of where the learning is headed.

 **Victorian Essential Learning Standards**



Physical, Personal and Social Learning

Knowledge, skills and behaviours in Health and Physical Education; Personal Learning; Interpersonal Development; Civics and Citizenship

Discipline-based Learning

Knowledge, skills and behaviours in The Arts; English and Languages Other Than English; The Humanities; Mathematics; Science

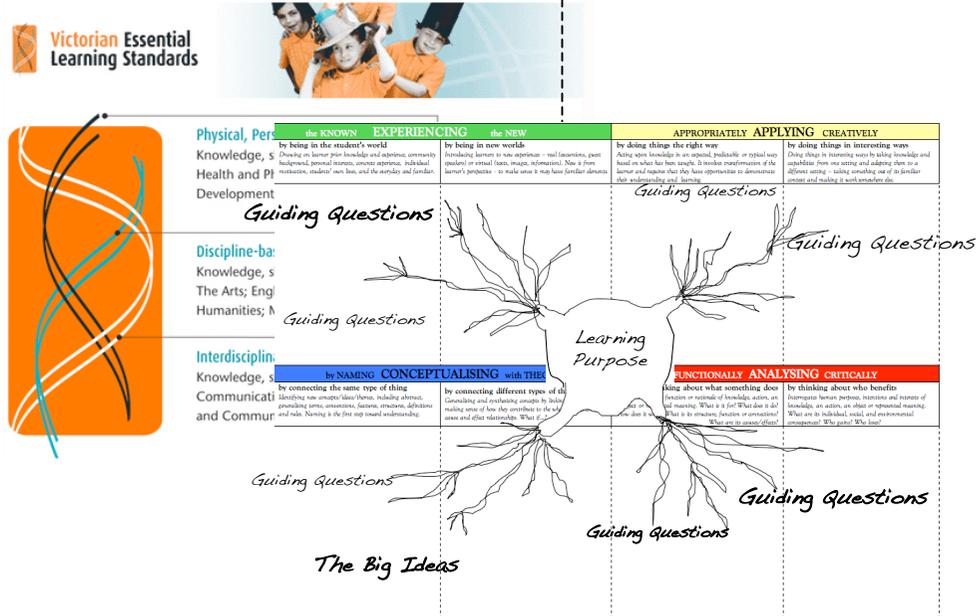
Interdisciplinary Learning

Knowledge, skills and behaviours in Communication; Design, Creativity and Technology; Information and Communications Technology; Thinking

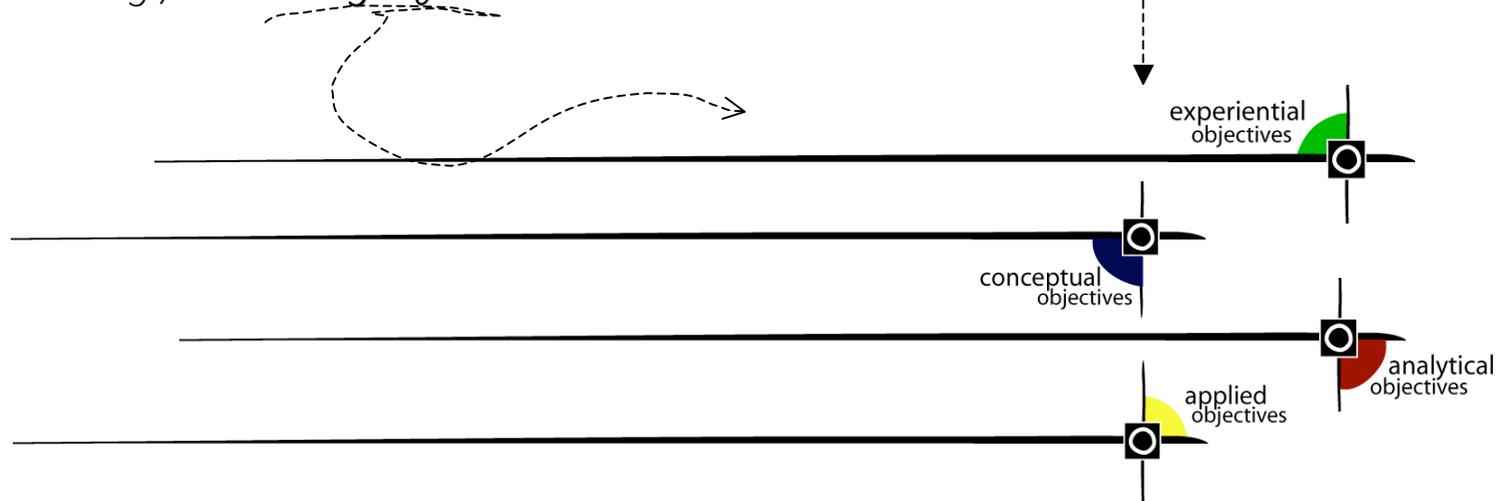
(4.) VELS

Once you have discussed and agreed on:

- (1) the Learning Purpose;
- (2) the Big Ideas which you want the learners to understand and to be confident articulating and expressing;
- (3) the Guiding Questions you want learners to explore, discuss and respond to through your design..
- (4) the Victorian Essential Learning Standards which your design will address,



you can begin drafting your Learning Objectives.





Learning by Design: Reflections & observations on Design Purpose



Design Purpose