Using the Problem Based Learning Model approach to teaching the TOK Themes

Matt Kuykendall

KOGNITY

Agenda

Why TOK + PBL
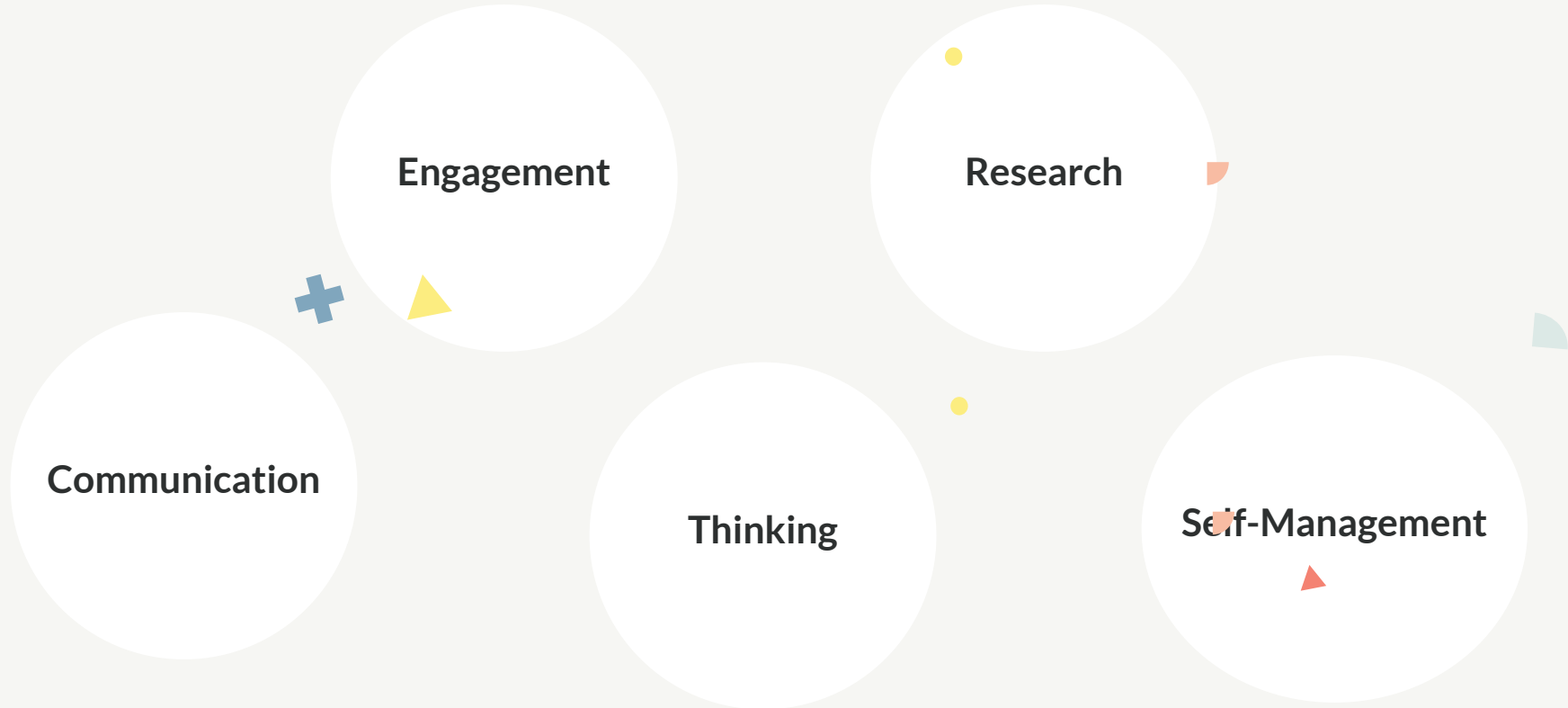
Steps to designing a PBL experience

Key process points

Resources

Why teach the Themes using PBL?

1. PBL requires students construct their own knowledge

2. PBL requires students practice the skill of "breaking down" a question into its component parts -- a key TOK skill (essay).

3. PBL ensures students are making their learning relevant and meaningful

4. PBL provides for authentic assessment of the ATLs in a real way

PBL Knockin' Out Those ATLs!!

Engagement

Research

Communication

Thinking

Self-Management

Steps to Designing a PBL Unit around the TOK Themes

Identify your two themes from one of:

Knowledge and language

Knowledge and technology

Knowledge and religion

Knowledge and politics

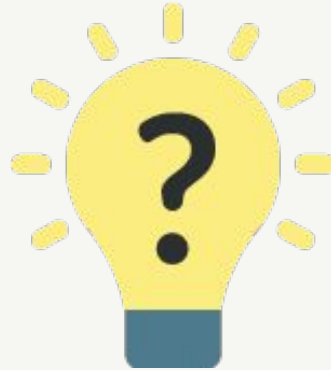**+   The required CORE THEME of Knowledge and the Knower**

Choose a "problem" that corresponds to each of your chosen themes

Examples:

Core theme: knowledge and the knower:

- Where do my beliefs come from? How to perform an intellectual autopsy

Knowledge and Tech:

- How do I exit the echo chamber?

Knowledge and Language:

- Should governments legislate language? *(this example will be used as the model throughout)*

Choose a "Stimulus" that frames the problem and provides relevancy and interest

What is Hate Speech

Free Speech Debate

Choose an "authentic product" that students can produce in response to the problem

Knowledge and Language Authentic Products:

1. A letter to a government agency in charge of censorship in which you advocate for censorship or the relaxation of censorship

2. Letter to a university supporting the right for some controversial individual to speak

3. A video putting forth arguments for unregulated free speech

4. A letter to a video game company / music label

5. A letter to an artist (singer/director/etc) who uses "hate speech" in their work or controversial language in their work.

Generate or identify knowledge questions that will create the "framework" for the inquiry and articulation.

Involve students in this process!

Aim for 3 or 4 total from different elements of the knowledge framework and/or the CORE; though the total number is up to you!

These will be the "checkpoints" of learning along the way!

Knowledge and Language Example

1. **Perspectives:** How do our values and assumptions influence the language in which we express our ideas? (Perspectives)

2. **Ethics:** Can we define words such as good or bad in terms of objective features of the world?

3. **THE CORE:** Who decides whether language should be censored in films and TV shows, and using what criteria?

4. **Methods and tools:** In what ways can language be used to influence, persuade or manipulate people's emotions?

Get the party started!

✓ It is up to you if you want students to work individually or in groups; I suggest partners or groups of three at most.

✓ Use the Kognity text as a "research resource" for your students

✓ Provide students with clear expectations regarding how you want them to answer their knowledge questions:
   a. Essay form?
   b. Oral recordings?
   c. A chart on a google doc? (supplied resource)

✓ This inquiry experience can be completely student centered, or blended; you can do 'mini lessons' along the way in regard to content and/or skills!
   a. This is suggested the first time through (see KEY process points)

KEY Process Points:

1. Know your kids; choose a good Stimulus / Hook that works for you and them! (see collaborative Google Sheet)

2. Be clear in regard to what is required
   a. You can either have students generate their OWN knowledge questions or choose 1 from each framework element from the guide (as done above)

3. "Chunk" the process via "check-ins"
   a. Google docs are your friend!
   b. Use the knowledge questions as natural checkpoints.

4. Require TOK Skills (embed in checkpoints):
   a. Clear claims
   b. Evidence in support of claims
   c. Clear counter claims
   d. Evidence in support of counterclaims
   e. A reasoned conclusion
   f. The presence of multiple "perspectives"
   g. Personal connection (The CORE!!!!)

5. Do "mini - lessons" of the above along the way!