

# Lessons from the Field of Activated Projects in Nevada’s Schools

Whether you are working at the classroom, school, or district level, you can activate learning that is aligned with the Nevada Portrait of a Learner. The key word in activate is ACT! Since 2022, school and district design teams across Nevada have been activating projects with the intention of changing classrooms, schools, and even districts to better serve learners to learn what they need to thrive throughout life. Here are a few takeaways from participants in design teams.

The following five lessons from the field illustrate how different projects may fit better into a specific approach.

<b>1</b>	Taking a Design Thinking Approach makes sense for Meadow Valley Middle because the process supported teams to take a somewhat unformed problem and reframe it through the needs of learners. Design Thinking also allows the team to prototype and test changes in structures that the team sees as needing to shift, including the use of time to engage students in deeper focus on solving problems in their local community.	<b>Lesson 1: We Must Do School Differently, and That Takes Time: Meadow Valley Middle School</b>  “We have a long way to go because our schools have been designed to work a certain way, and making these adjustments will take time for our structures to change, but even more- it will take time for our mental models to change as well.”
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<b>2</b>	This Delta Academy team found that small shifts in practices allowed them to observe students and staff as adult control was relinquished to support students to gain control and amplify their own voice and agency in learning. This project fits into both appreciative inquiry and design thinking approaches - focusing on what was already working in the school and mapping that to the strengths and assets in place in the school.	<b>Lesson 2: Question Your Own Beliefs about Young People: Delta Team</b>  “We discovered that we have a slightly fixed mindset around students that aren’t engaged or aren’t receptive to self-reflection or changing their growth mindset. But the reality is that in all things, we have to meet students (and adults) where they are. We realize that with those students, we have to relinquish control and allow them to grow at their own pace, so their voice and agency levels will vary. While they
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	are growing, we are still there to water and help tend their garden.”
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3	<p>Focusing on a specific problem, student engagement, with the intention of impacting engagement in a positive direction, set the stage for a Manse team to analyze the current state against the desired state and take learning actions - choice and personalization - to increase engagement.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 3: Test your project idea with learners to find what works: Manse Elementary School</b></p> <p>“Our greatest success was seeing how choice and personalization in learning impacted student engagement.”</p>
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4	<p>Understanding that teachers believe in competency-driven learning begins with beliefs as to what’s working in a school or district. Using Appreciative Inquiry to focus on how to help teachers figure out where to start or what exactly to change makes sense in the context of Churchill Middle School’s project work – especially since they already have a district Portrait of a Learner and have started work to build out learning experiences that align.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 4: You will run into roadblocks that are real: Churchill Middle School</b></p> <p>“We faced several surprises/barriers over the course of our work this year.... It isn’t necessarily that teachers don’t believe in incorporating the different competencies. They may not know where to start or what exactly to change to make this happen.”</p>
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5	<p>When Liberty Peak Elementary’s team set out to build a K-5 model grounded in Impact Competency with a focus on careers, they quickly discovered that they needed to bring more educators and parents into their work. This Appreciative Inquiry focus on inclusivity of all is one that brings a community together around a new initiative.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 5: Challenge Your Team to Look to the Future: Liberty Peak Elementary School</b></p> <p>“Ask ourselves: How do we keep this going? How do we involve more people? How do we go bigger and deeper? How do we reach every kid?”</p>
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