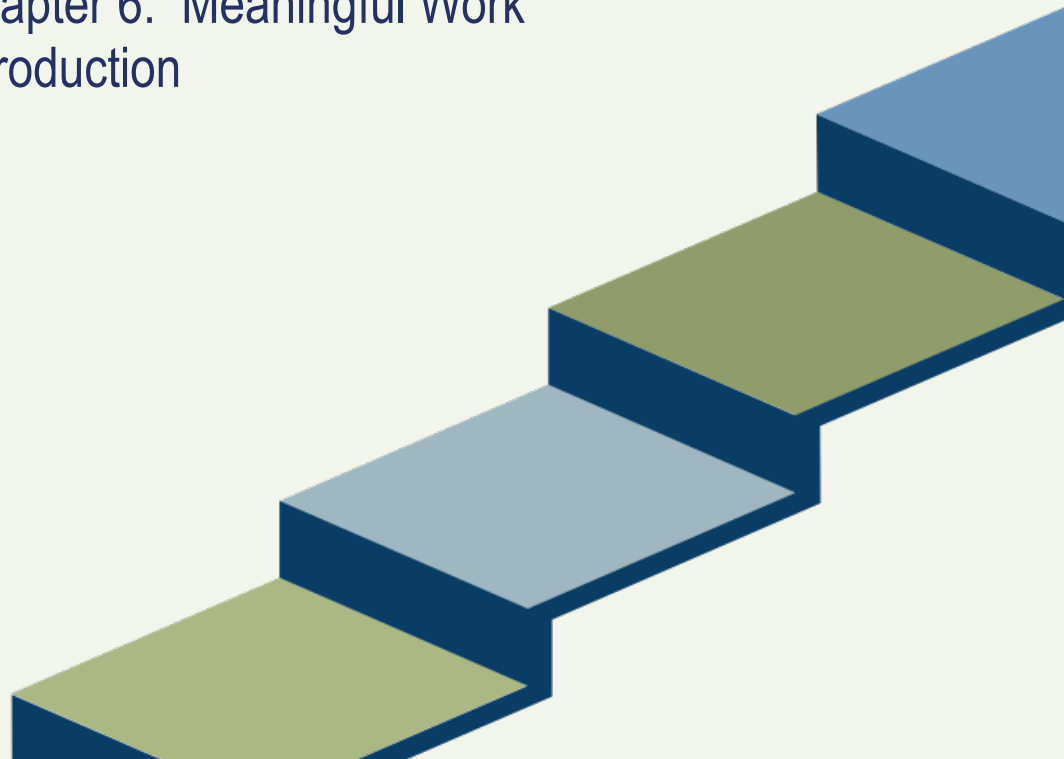


Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to
Accelerate Student
Learning

Companion Guide

Chapter 6: Meaningful Work
Introduction



Chapter 6

Meaningful work

To design more meaningful work for students, teachers should be conscientious about personalizing learning, conveying the intent and value of that learning, and creating opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning process. Customizing learning tasks for individual students means inquiring about our students' preferences and interests and using those to help generate a relationship to the content. Once students can make a personal connection, they're more likely to see the value of the content because they can envision how it relates to their lives and interests. As discussed, this process of grounding new information within existing knowledge and expertise helps students make important associations that aid in understanding and retaining information. Additionally, providing examples of how the content could be useful, and inviting students to generate their own ideas about utility, will help motivate them to want to learn and pay attention. Researchers point out that "whereas it may be difficult to convince students that academic tasks are interesting (intrinsic value) or important for their identity (attainment value), it may be easier to convince them that the tasks are useful" (Priniski et al., 2017, para. 26). We can further reinforce their ideas about the usefulness of the content by making relevant career connections and inviting students to set goals for their learning trajectories.

Another dimension of meaningful work is cultural relevance. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, cultural relevance is achieved by including and valuing students' unique cultures and backgrounds within an academic setting. Studies have found that Culturally Relevant Education (CRE) benefits all students, no matter their background, because it promotes cultural consciousness and competence and makes learning more authentic to students' experiences. It

also uses an asset-based approach to learning, insisting that all students can and should succeed academically (Priniski et al., 2017).

In addition to culturally relevant learning, teachers can look for opportunities to include rightful presence. How might learning tasks connect or relate to community issues and systemic justices/injustices? Teaching through this lens promotes equity, encourages diverse perspectives in the classroom, and ensures all students feel fully welcome and engaged.