

LEARNING WALK

A PRACTICE FOR FOSTERING THE MAKER CAPACITIES:
LOOKING CLOSELY, EXPLORING COMPLEXITY & FINDING OPPORTUNITY



While working on a group project you can often get so caught up in what you are doing that you forget to take the chance to learn from other groups in the room.

Now is your moment to take a learning walk, but there's no need to disrupt the flow of the groups around you to learn from them...

Shh! You're on a learning mission. Your job is to go around and look at the work of other small groups, and then to take some of the strategies that you see them using back to your own group, to move your work forward.

During your walk try to observe what's happening with different groups, pick one or two of the questions below to focus on. Other group members can take a walk later and focus on a different question so you can share your findings and learn from what you see.

- What are they learning from trial and error?
- What design choices have they made that seem promising?
- How are different groups organizing the tasks?
- What roles and responsibilities do group members have?
- What is one cool thing you want to share back with your group?
- What is one piece of advice you can offer your group from your observations that might save time, advance your work, or provide a new approach?

Learning Walk

This practice supports co-inspiration and the cross-pollination of ideas during maker-centered group work. As educator Gus Goodwin points out, “One of the beauties of maker-centered learning classes is that kids can think and build and talk to their peers and share ideas — all of the things they are not allowed to do in most other classes.”

When and How Can This Practice Be Used?

We are grateful to educators Gus Goodwin, Ilya Pratt and Aaron Vanderwerff for sharing their various iterations of this practice. While young people are working in small groups, they often become so engrossed in their own projects that they don't take the time to look around and see how their peers are addressing similar problems and challenges. The purpose of this practice is to support co-inspiration and the cross-pollination of ideas when students are working in small groups. The practice may also be used to help students get unstuck when they run into obstacles as they work on collaborative projects with their peers. The practice should be thoughtfully introduced, modeled, and facilitated in order to foster an ethos that values learning from each other.

Here are some considerations for implementing this practice:

- It is helpful to have a handful of learning walk prompts ready to hand to students when they seemed to be too narrowly focused on their own work.
- Hack the language of the learning walk prompts to best suit your learners, your learning environment, and the different activities that your students may be working on. The more tailored the prompt is to a particular learning experience, the better.
- More directed variations: Ask learners to look for a particular thing that is or will be a curricular focus. For example, evidence of collaboration, specific application of content knowledge, or a list of materials a team is using.
- Make it fun.
- Have two learners walk together, quietly asking and sharing: What do you notice?
- Provide a camera. Later, make the photo available and have the learner write about or share what they were noticing.
- Provide time for students to reflect on what knowledge or skills they gained from their learning walks in a whole-group discussion at the end of class. This is a good opportunity for peers to acknowledge what they learned from one another.

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