

Pass the Parcel

A routine for fostering intrinsic motivation for deep learning and understanding.

Invite students to think about a goal they have and imagine it as a treasure inside a parcel that is wrapped in many layers. With each layer they unwrap, they get closer to their treasure:

As you **REFLECT** on what has been learned about . . . (current or past topics), think about connections with (this topic) . . . and your goal. With these connections, you have unwrapped the first layer of the parcel.

IDENTIFY significant connections that you would like to explore further and think about why they are significant to you. With each significant connection you identify, you unwrap another layer.

EXPLORE all ways you can to understand what it is about these connections that can help you unwrap the parcel and reach the prize. Each exploration removes another layer.

What will you do to **ACT** on all you have learned, so the last wrapping paper will come loose and your treasure is in reach?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

To heighten awareness that what is learned in and out of school are often connected with each other. These connections can enable moving forward to achieve goals. This fosters intrinsic motivation. It provokes curiosity, wonder and delight in finding the unexpected. Exploring the connections can broaden and deepen understanding.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

What is meant by goals? Short term goals, career goals, health and wellbeing, sporting, social. See examples on the following page.

Why Pass the Parcel? Pass the Parcel is a children's party game where, through a process of unwrapping layer after layer of paper, the child who unwraps the last layer receives the prize hidden deep inside. The exact form varies, including passing the parcel around a circle of children as music is playing, and, when the music stops, the child holding the parcel unwraps a layer, and so it continues. This thinking routine uses Pass the Parcel as a metaphor. As learning and understanding broaden and deepen, the layers are removed; core knowledge, understanding and constructive ways forward, are the prize. If students do not know the game, you can explain it briefly.

How could Pass the Parcel be used in a classroom? A parcel isn't necessary. Teachers can select topics directly from the curriculum, current events, or concepts such as freedom, democracy, peace, measurement etc. (see next page). Students can also suggest topics. Students commence progression through the steps quietly with reflection, then with discussions and recording the responses either individually, in a group, or as a whole class, sharing what they think they know about the topic and connections they are making.

After this, encourage students to continue their explorations any ways they think will be particularly helpful e.g. time in the library for research, drawing concept maps or diagrams of how things are connected or effect each other, list questions you would like to ask, places you could go to find out more... At a later stage invite students to share experiences related to the topic and what they have explored. The last step can be composed of discussions and formulating action plans to reach goals.

How and why invite students to suggest something they would like to explore? When students suggest topics, there is immediate engagement and shared ownership of the learning and it can evoke intrinsic motivation toward seeing how these topics connect to the curriculum.

How might you follow up this thinking routine to maximize the portability of knowledge? When students have had time to explore the topic using their own goals as a focus in their explorations, perhaps they could adopt the more traditional version of Pass the Parcel to share their new learning about the topic. They might list key points they have found out about the topic and wrap the list up as a 'treasure', providing a brief overview of their findings; and continue wrapping up this treasure, on each layer pasting a question that they had been asking on their learning journey; and then invite other students in the class to play the game. The lucky student unwrapping that final layer would instantly have the results of this exploration of the topic. This way individuals or small groups could share their experiences and new knowledge of the topic seen through different perspectives and build on their learning and experiences.

This thinking routine was developed as part of the PZ Connect project at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.