

Activities for introducing design thinking

Option #1

Design a cup: Sanjli Gidwaney, the National Director of [Design for Change USA](#), introduces the design thinking mindset as a quick "Do Now"-style activity at the start of her presentation. Before she has even introduced herself, she asks participants to design a cup for her. Depending on the time allotted, participants can imagine it in their heads, jot it down as a sketch, or use craft supplies to make a more functional prototype of the cup. Once the cup is "designed," Sanjli then asks participants to present their design to her. In response, she points out the assumptions about her that the designers seem to be making as they provide more details about the cup. Through this dialogue, Sanjli illustrates why designers must slow down and understand the situation before jumping to solve it—moving from assumptions to insights. According to the Design for Change methodology, insights emerge when you engage with the user and design solutions WITH, instead of FOR them.



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Option #2

Design a wallet: [The Wallet Project](#), created by the [Stanford d.school](#), is an immersive activity meant to give participants a full cycle through the design thinking process in as short a time as possible (90 minutes + debrief.) The project itself gives facilitators the opportunity to touch on the fundamental values of the d.school - human-centered design, a bias towards action, and a culture of iteration and rapid prototyping - without attempting to communicate all of the methods and activities that the term “design thinking” encompasses.



Option #3

Design a backpack (or something else): At the end of the step, you can find a guide created by Autodesk that is meant to help facilitate a 30-60 minute design challenge for students that lays out the Empathize-Define-Ideate-Prototype-Test design phases. This activity could be adapted for your colleagues to design something more teacher-centric. A tote bag? A desktop organizer? The perfect doorstop that doesn't walk away on its own?



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Option #4

View examples of design thinking in action: If you do not have enough time to practice design thinking before tackling a real problem at your school, you might instead share some examples of design thinking in action. [The Innovator's Compass](#), a framework created by Ela Ben-Ur, is a highly learnable, uncomplicated approach that helps people find better ways to move forward that are grounded in the principles that matter most. On this [page](#) of the website, you can find real-life stories of the Compass being practiced. For example, here is a [video](#) explaining how a master's of education program uses this framework to promote its teacher fellows to be more agile; and here is a [video](#) of a classroom teacher explaining how she uses the Compass as a tool for parent-teacher conferences.



Option #5

Assign some pre-reading: Ideo's [Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit](#) is an excellent resource for exploring the principles of design thinking and how they can be applied to develop meaningful solutions in the classroom or at a school. You might use the ["Four A's" Text Protocol](#) to inspire a deep reading of an excerpt of the text. This could open up an opportunity for your colleagues to share their hopes and fears about embarking upon this journey into design thinking