Junior Version Characteristics Worksheet

Description:

How well do your projects reflect the principles of junior versions? This exercise will help you answer that question. As discussed in the exercise overview and *Learning Design for Broader, Deeper Competencies* (Report 11), to reap the benefits of Whole Learning, educators need to be able to structure learning experiences in a way that is both practically feasible and supports their students in developmentally appropriate ways. This is where the "junior" part of "junior versions" comes in. Creating a junior version is part process and part art, like inventing a Little League, lab environment, or Model UN for the full activity — transforming a real-life working, creating, or playing experience into a developmentally appropriate learning experience for your students.

Purpose:

The goal of this tool is to equip your team with a reliable process for understanding junior versions, and consider and analyze how you are applying that framework to your current learning experiences. Junior versions are magical when done right! (As nearly all adults recognize from having participated in at least one successful junior version sometime in their adolescence.) This tool will help you start thinking that way. Even at a quick, conceptual level, these tools can flag key issues and "help change the conversation" within your team with respect to transforming teaching and learning.

Instructions for Use:

- Before you begin, review the sample worksheet at the bottom of this document, where we analyze the Mayan Community Project as an example. For a full description of the Mayan project visit the Tools section on the MyWays' website.
- For this exercise, we suggest selecting a multi-faceted experience that runs a semester or more.
- Then working individually or as a team, map how your learning experience aligns with the elements of a junior version. Record the elements missing.
- Discuss and combine the individual responses. Come up with a joint analysis and action plan based on that analysis.

NGLC MyWays

Junior Version Characteristics Worksheet

Characteristics of Junior Versions	Explanation of Junior Version Experience:
Capture the basic structural features of the full-scale activity.	How this is demonstrated: Elements missing:
Throw out less important aspects of the activity, while leaving its spirit and shape intact.	How this is demonstrated: Elements missing:
Swap in simulations, replicas, or scaled-down versions for elements of the activity that are not developmentally appropriate or practically possible.	How this is demonstrated: Elements missing:
Set and maintain a reasonable level of challenge for the group and for individual learners.	How this is demonstrated: Elements missing:
Include all seven Whole Learning principles, balancing an experience of the meaningful whole with attention to the hard parts, hidden norms, and group work, as well as with reflection on how elements of the learning are happening.	How this is demonstrated: Elements missing: Principles missing: (and could they be incorporated?)
Prototype and tune the learning experience to align with student capabilities.	What do you hope to learn through the prototypes?:

Mayan Community Project - Junior Version Characteristics Sample

While the seven principles of whole learning provide an excellent set of design parameters, the issue of how to create an appropriately "junior" version into which to embed the principles deserves additional attention. This sample from the Mayan project helps us see what that looks like.

Remember, in working through the Mayan project, that this is a learning experience for seventh graders. While the teacher made sure to include the "basic structural features" of the whole learning the exercise was addressing (developing respect for a culture, completing authentic work in publishing a book, and feeling the agency/empowerment of actively helping others), it is interesting to note, for example which parts of the project involved complete versions of the full-scale activity and which parts were scaled down and how. (See row three in the worksheet on swaps, replicas, and scaled-down elements.)

Another important component of junior versions, which you can see in the table below, is that the level of challenge be reasonable for the knowledge level, interest, and learning agility of the learners involved right there and then, and second, that the level be reasonable for the general developmental readiness of the age group of those learners. And of course, there is interplay between those two.

The important message here is that teachers/educators need to know both a) their students, as people and learners, and b) human development! If your teachers have not had development on the latter, or if your learning model or system makes it difficult for teachers to know their students well, it is going to difficult to create effective junior versions – or whole learning. In terms of projects being designed with developmental readiness in mind, notice how well the Mayan project seemed to hit the key developmental needs for this age group identified in the Consortium on Chicago School Research's newly-published *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework* .

Characteristics of Junior Versions	Junior Version Characteristics of the Mayan Community Project
Capture the basic structural features of the full-scale activity.	**How this is demonstrated**: The Project was designed to address: 1) developing respect for the Mayan culture, 2) completing authentic work on all the key stages of publishing a book, and 3) experiencing the feeling of agency or empowerment involved in helping others. The teacher was careful to embed core structural elements for each of these ends, including 1) covering the integrity and strengths of the Mayan culture, both past and present, 2) establishing a real publishing process, from research to writing, editing, and marketing, and 3) establishing a fundraising project that enabled her students to effect change in the real world (funding the schooling of Guatemalan students - 6 in the first year, 7 in the second).
Throw out less important aspects of the activity, while leaving its spirit and shape intact.	**How this is demonstrated**: The learners did not travel to Central America, run printing-presses, see their book on the NY Times best-seller list, or change educational policy in Guatemala, but the "junior version" activities and experiences they participated in required all the responsibility, understanding, communication, persistence, cooperation, and other knowledge, skills, and habits of success inherent to the whole learning targeted in the project – at a level appropriate for them.

Swap in simulations, replicas, or scaled-down versions for elements of the activity that are not developmentally appropriate or practically possible.	**How this is demonstrated**: Some of the activities undertaken by the students were "full version" experiences. E.g. the students ran bake sales, called local radio stations, and invited acquaintances to book signings like any adult or student group who wants to raise funds and awareness. But other elements of the project involved "scaled-down" versions of tasks. By simulating a publishing house in their classroom, for example, the students were able to experience all the responsibilities of publishing: they filled out job applications (with cover letters), chose/were chosen for committees for each job role (editors, translators, public relations), and worked to schedules. The editors were fellow students, but their stamps still said "approved" or "changes needed," and illustrations went through multiple critiques – at an appropriately demanding, seventh-grade level.
Set and maintain a reasonable level of challenge for the group and for individual learners.	**How this is demonstrated**: The teacher was aware that to her students "research is never a popular or exciting word in the classroom," so she structured the research element of the project to include both collaboration (each student participated in a Research Focus Group) and individual choice (within the focus area, learners could ask their own questions, ensuring that "each student also had a chance to develop expertise in an area of interest to them." The multiple roles in the junior version of the publishing house also enabled students with different strengths and abilities to develop those further: "Our advanced Spanish speakers got to shine as senior translators and our fantastic presenters got to be part of the public relations group."
Include all seven Whole Learning principles, balancing an experience of the meaningful whole with attention to the hard parts, hidden norms, and group work, as well as with reflection on how elements of the learning are happening.	**How this is demonstrated**: See the completed Whole Learning analysis for the Mayan project, which illustrates how the experience is designed to address all seven of the Whole Learning principles . **Principles missing: (and could they be incorporated?)** None missing.
Prototype and tune the learning experience to align with student capabilities.	At the time the project materials and reflections were loaded on HTH's project website, the project had been run twice. The teacher's reflections on the project illustrate the kind of active reflection and iteration that makes for the development of a successful project.

Developed by Next Generation Learning Challenges based on *Making Learning Whole* by David Perkins.